



Arctic Development
Library

***Policy For Recreation Development Of
Kananaskis Country***

***Type of Study: Policy Material/related
Library***

Date of Report: 1977

Author: Alberta Parks, Recreation & Wildlife

Catalogue Number: 11-55-81



RECREATION, PARKS
AND WILDLIFE

Office of
the Minister

55-81

403/427-3672

107 Legislative Building
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

T5K 2B6

KANANASKIS COUNTRY

I take great pleasure in presenting a "Policy For Recreation Development of Kananaskis country".

The following conceptual plan is based upon the zoning for the Eastern slopes and is intended to direct orderly recreation development in such a manner as to allow the integration of the widest possible range of recreation opportunities while ensuring the preservation of this valuable resource for present and future generations.

Although primarily a development plan the sensitivity of the environment, high watershed and fishery values and important wildlife resources are recognized. Implementation of the plan will result in a high degree of visitor management and control, directing specific activities to those areas best suited and away from sites of major conflict. This will improve recreation enjoyment for large numbers of people and will provide greater environmental protection.

The policy provides the conceptual framework for subsequent detailed site planning and design. Detailed planning will ensure the highest possible levels of environmental sensitivity while maximizing the recreation opportunities for all Albertans. The Public Advisory Committee will be involved at this stage.

I am confident that you share my enthusiasm that this innovative plan will greatly expand the range of exciting recreation opportunities available within Alberta.

J. Allen Adair
Minister of Recreation,
Parks and Wildlife

POLICY FOR RECREATION DEVELOPMENT OF
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

ALBERTA
SEPTEMBER, 1977

SUMMARY OF MAJOR POLICIES

- (1) All recreation developments are consistent with the Eastern Slopes Zoning.
- (2) Implementation of this plan **will** provide the greatest possible variety of recreation **opportunity** and allow adequate access to all **Albertans** while preserving this spectacular **region** for future generations.
- (3) The **Canmore Corridor** will continue to act as the service center for Kananaskis Country and no new townsites will be allowed to develop outside this area.
- (4) Camping, day-use and trail-related opportunities will be expanded and upgraded **to the** level outlined in this plan and all camping and trail **use will** be restricted to these designated facilities.
- (5) Three **Alpine Villages** will **be** constructed at Barrier Lake, Fortress Junction and **Evans-Thomas**, the latter to include a golf course.
- (6) Snowmobile areas **will** be developed at McLean Creek, Cataract Creek and **Waiparous Creek**; the use of snowmobiles and other off highway recreation vehicles will be strictly prohibited in the remainder of the **region**.
- (7) Horse **use will** be **prohibited** in the Kananaskis-Spray sub-regions; trail and **corral** facilities will be provided to enhance this pursuit in **the Elbow-Sheep** sub-region.
- (8) The **regional road** network **will** be upgraded to provide suitable access **to** all recreational developments and to provide alternative circular scenic **routes**. No new roads will be built and the use of all **vehicles will be** restricted to designated roads.

- (9) All utility services will be designed and constructed to maintain the highest possible level of environmental quality.
- (10) Every effort will be made to maintain and enhance wildlife and sport fish, two of the important recreation resources of the area, by careful management and habitat improvement. Priority will be given to wildlife in those areas of highest potential.
- (11) Recognizing the high levels of recreation use and environmental sensitivity of Kananaskis Country sufficient operational manpower will be provided to ensure that the policies outlined in this document are strictly adhered to.

SITE LOCATIONS OF FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Kananaskis Country, here defined as the area encompassing the headwaters of the Spray, Kananaskis, Jumpingpound, Elbow, Sheep and Highwood Rivers, includes some of the most spectacular alpine scenery in Alberta. It contains a wide variety of vegetation types, interesting geological formations, wildlife populations and diversity of terrain, allowing it to support an integrated recreation system from intensive development nodes to wildland. Due to its proximity to Calgary and its easy access, it is also one of the most heavily used recreation areas of the Province. The recognition of these values led the Alberta Government to announce its intention to create a large provincial park in the Kananaskis region in the spring of 1974. These values also led the Eastern Slopes Interdepartmental Planning Committee to zone much of the area as "Prime Protection": to preserve the environmentally sensitive terrain and valuable aesthetic resource. The lower valleys have been zoned as "General Recreation" to retain the natural environment and provide for a wide range of dispersed and concentrated recreation activities. Smaller areas of developable land have been zoned as "Facility" areas to accommodate intensive facilities and services necessary for outdoor recreation.

The eastern periphery of the area is zoned as "Multiple Use" and in addition to recreation will continue to be used for grazing domestic livestock and for small scale forestry operations.

The following conceptual plan is based upon the zoning for the Eastern Slopes and is intended to direct orderly recreation development in such a manner as to allow the integration of the widest possible range of recreation opportunities while ensuring the preservation of this valuable resource for present and future generations.

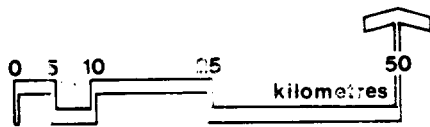
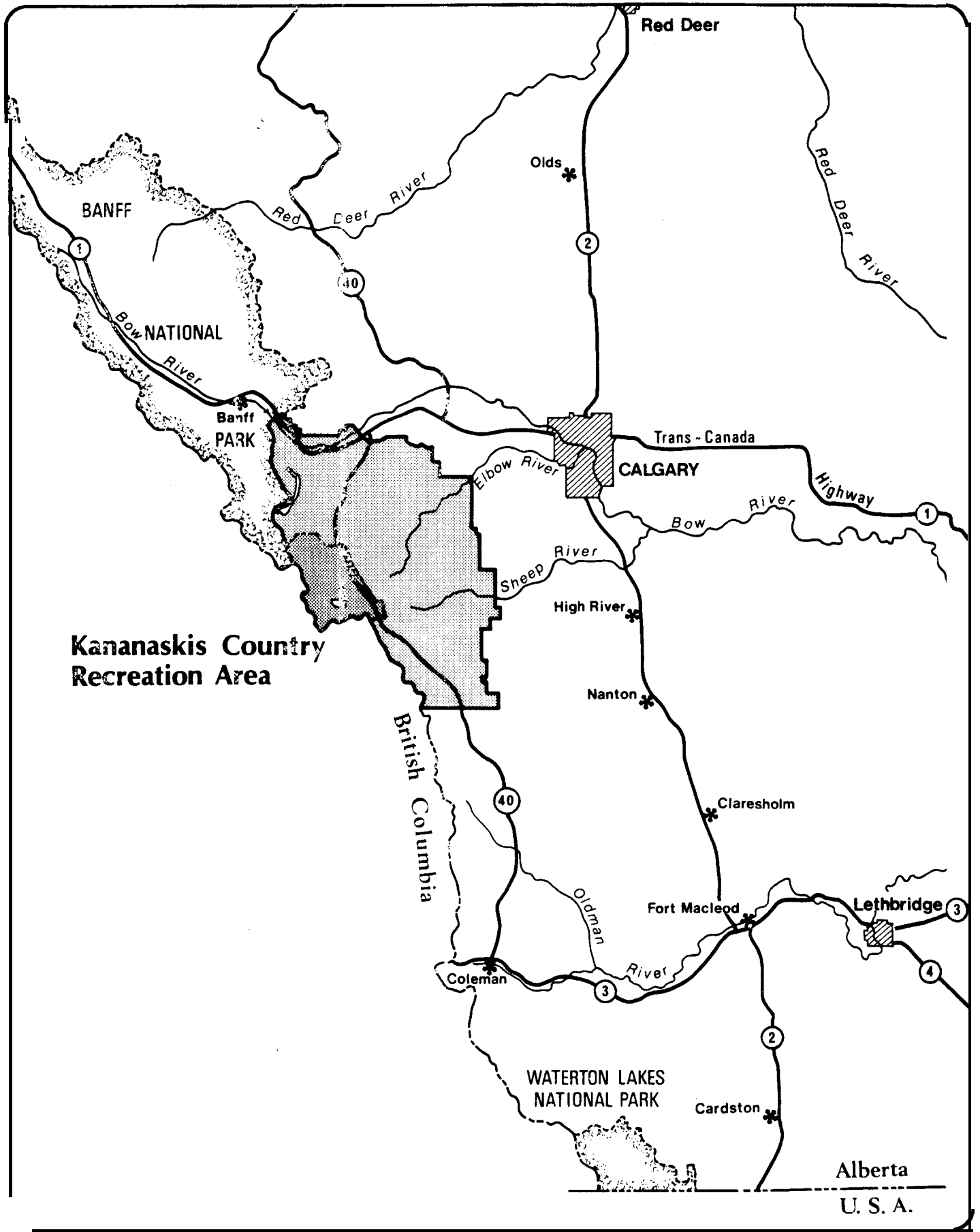
Although primarily a development plan the sensitivity of the environment, high watershed and fishery values and important wildlife resources are recognized. Implementation of the plan **will result in a high degree of visitor management** and control, directing specific activities to those areas **best** suited and away from sites of major conflict. This will improve **recreation enjoyment** for large numbers of people and will provide greater environmental protection. Curtailment of uncontrolled off highway vehicle use and indiscriminate recreation use combined with wildlife habitat improvement should allow an increase in wildlife populations thus reversing past trends.

For discussion purposes **Kananaskis Country is divided into three sub-regions**, the **Canmore Corridor**, the Kananaskis-Spray and the Elbow-Sheep. Due to the terrain **and** access these three sub-regions can be managed somewhat independently, however, the entire region must be considered to provide a balance **of** recreation opportunities.

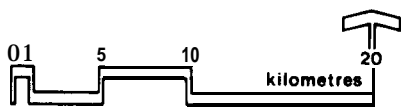
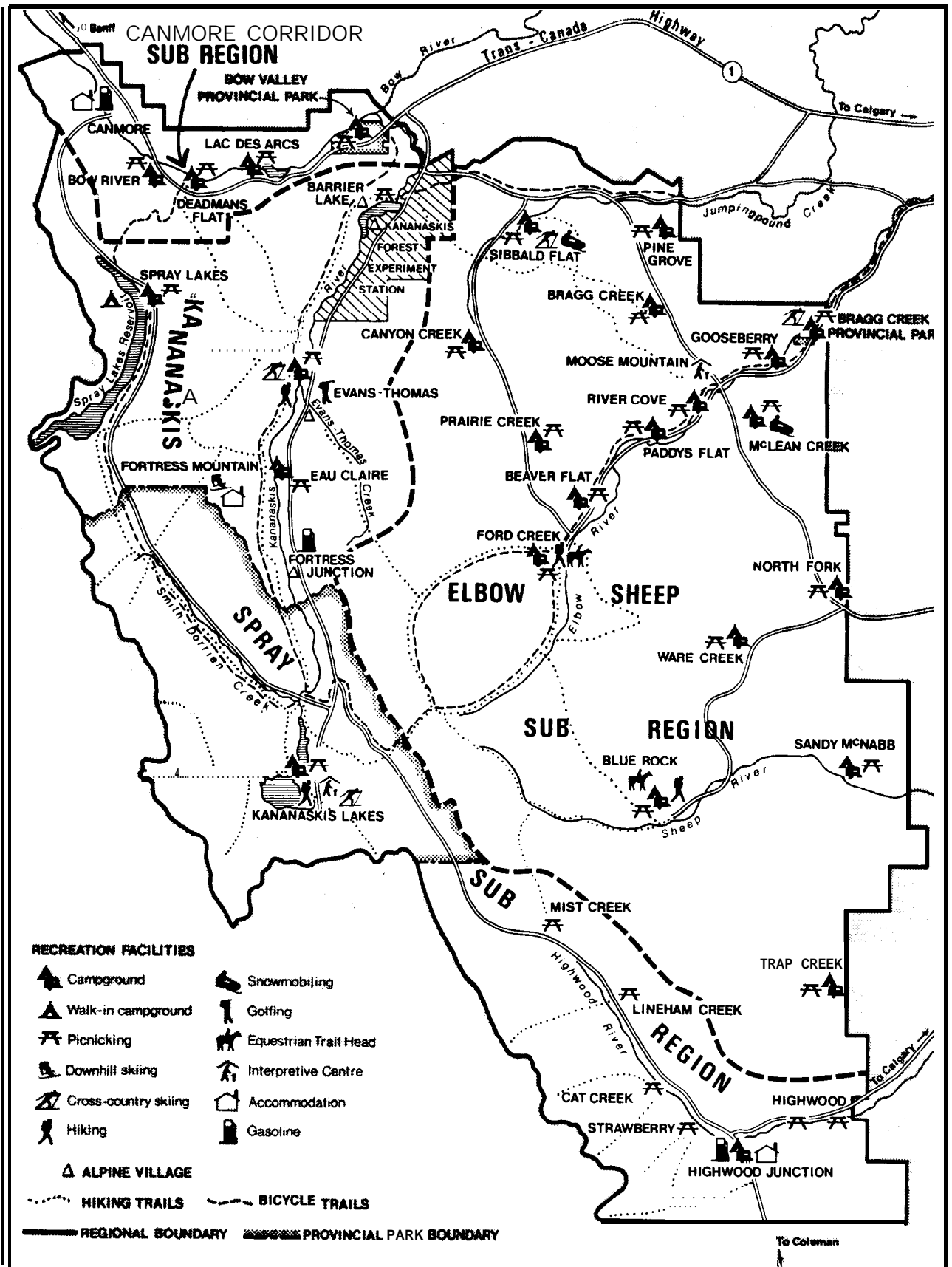
The location **of** Kananaskis Country, the region and sub-region boundaries, place names used in **the** text and boundary of Kananaskis Provincial Park are **shown on the** following three maps.

Canmore Corridor Sub-Region

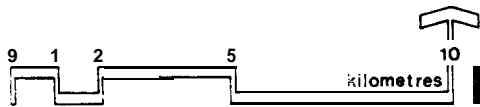
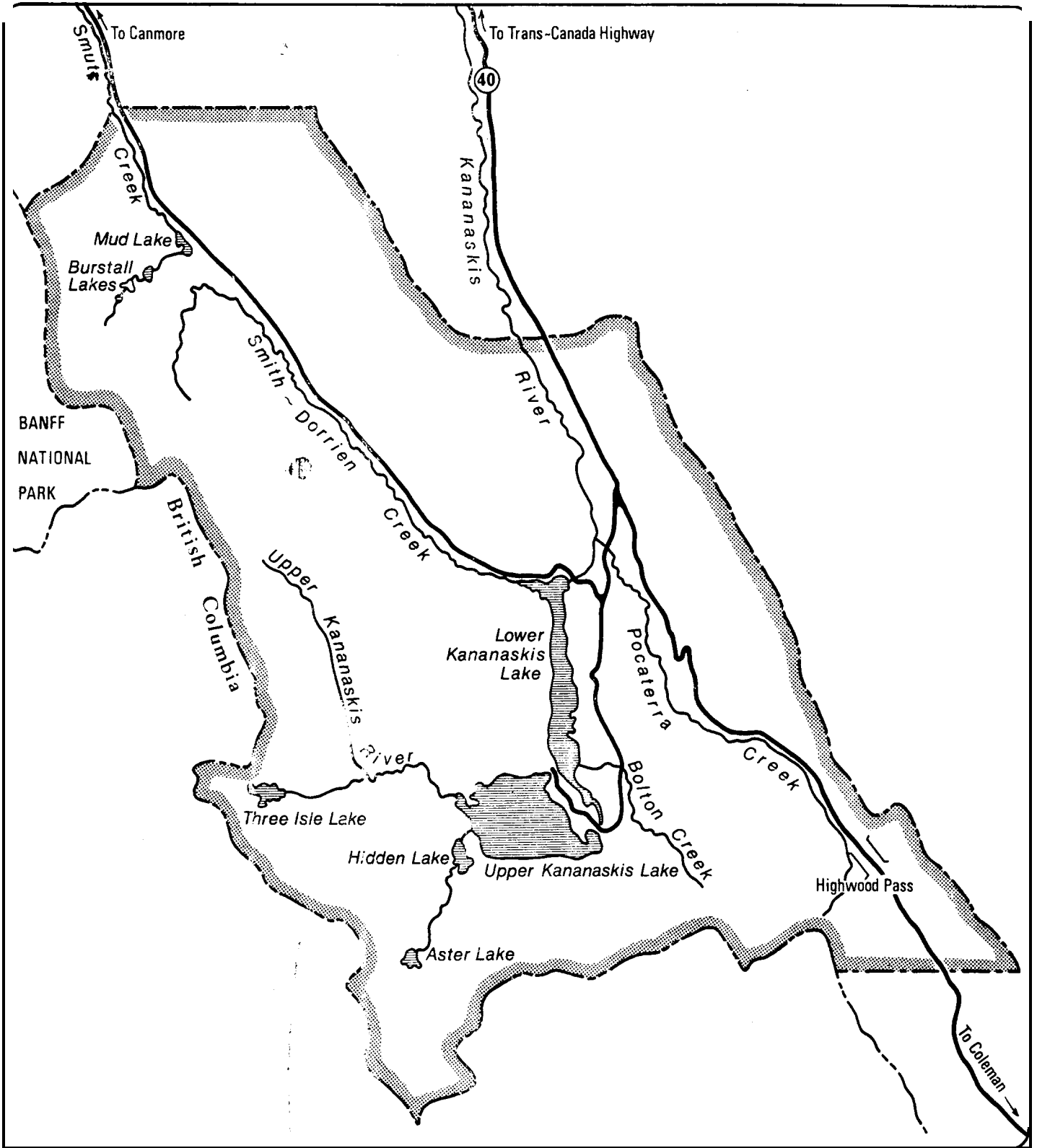
The Canmore Corridor is one of the most highly developed portions of the Eastern Slopes; it provides a major transportation system through the mountains and acts as a service center for the high recreation values of the surrounding region. The following discussion of recreation **development** in the **Canmore Corridor** is consistent with "The Canmore Corridor Integrated Land Management Plan" prepared under the auspices of the Eastern Slopes Interdepartmental Planning Committee. The Canmore Plan **regards** the **Canmore Corridor** as a service center for Banff National Park, the **Kananaskis Valley** and **the** traveling public in general. The plan for **Kananaskis Country** stresses that the Corridor will continue to provide this service **function and** be the basis of all permanent residential accommodation. Under no circumstances will new town sites be **allowed** to develop **outside** this area.



KANANASKIS COUNTRY REGIONAL LOCATION



KANANASKIS COUNTRY RECREATION PLAN



KANANASKIS PROVINCIAL PARK

The Canmore Corridor presently contains approximately 215 units of motel and hotel accommodation, mostly located near Canmore. It is expected that the private sector will provide additional units as demand warrants.

The Interdepartmental Committee on Environmental Education has recognized the need for an environmental education facility in the Canmore Corridor to serve the school systems in the Calgary area. The educational theme to be adopted is oriented toward the impact of man's development on the natural environment making the Canmore Corridor an excellent outdoor classroom. The facility would be designed to accommodate 150 to 200 students.

Alberta Transportation campsites at Lac des Arcs, Dead Man's Flat, and Bow River provide a total of 110 auto-access units. These three campsites will be upgraded and operated as satellites to Bow Valley Provincial Park.

Bow Valley Provincial Park contains 235 auto-access campsites as well as day-use areas and trails. The Canmore Plan recommends expansion of Bow Valley Park to the north and south east. The south east expansion will provide land for the development of a 200 unit auto access campground as part of the Kananaskis Country Plan. Parking and bicycle rentals will be provided in this area as the starting point for the Kananaskis Valley Bicycle Trail. Expansion to the north will include additional natural environments in the park ideal for trails and interpretive programs. Existing facilities in the Park will be expanded and upgraded to serve visitors to the Park as well as through traffic on the Trans Canada Highway.

The Pigeon Mountain Ski Resort lease has been reassigned and plans are to reopen for business this coming winter. The present lease permits winter skiing operations only although an application has been received for expansion to year-round use.

The Pigeon Mountain-Wind Creek area is critical range for elk and mountain sheep throughout the year. Expansion of resort operations beyond their present levels will only be approved after the completion of detailed environmental assessments that outline ways of minimizing the impact on wildlife populations. Snowmobiling or the use of other off highway vehicles will not be permitted in this area.

The Chilver Lake area south of Bow Valley Provincial Park contains a number of institutional group camps and dude ranches. Institutional camps will be concentrated in this area to minimize infrastructure requirements.

Kananaskis-Spray Sub-Region

The Kananaskis-Spray Sub-Region is one of the most important recreation areas in the foothills of Alberta. With the adoption of the Eastern Slopes zoning very few non-recreation activities will occur. Underground coal mining will be permitted in a small area surrounding Wind Creek. Spray, Kananaskis and Barrier Lakes will continue to operate as storage reservoirs for hydro-power generation. Since fishing is the only important water based recreation activity this results in few conflicts. High standards of recreation development and intensive management of this valuable area will help satisfy recreation demand, minimize environmental impairment and enhance wildlife and fishery resources.

The Barrier Lake area is presently undeveloped but is used for random camping and day-use as well as fishing and boating.

A day-use area will be provided to enhance these activities. This will be integrated with the interpretive opportunities provided by the Kananaskis Forest Experiment Station.

One of the first three Alpine Villages will be at Barrier Lake utilizing the **knoll** to the east of the lake as well as the area north of the **lake**. The Village will include Chalet accommodation; dining facilities, a swimming pool and possibly a campground. Details of the **Alpine Villages** are discussed under that heading.

The Kananaskis Forest Experiment Station is owned by the Government of Canada and operated by the Canadian Forestry Service. Although the primary function of the Station is forestry research, a public awareness program is in operation to better inform the public of the use and management of forest lands. Program facilities include a **visitor** centre, picnic area, and self-guiding interpretative trails. The University of Calgary leases 8.5 acres for its Environmental Sciences Center. The **Kananaskis** Forest Experiment Station includes some of the best developable land in the **Kananaskis** Valley as well as valuable wildlife habitat. Negotiations will commence to obtain the **Kananaskis** Forest Experimental from the Federal Government. The existing facilities will be turned into an Environmental Education Center in conjunction with the University of Calgary Environmental Sciences Center.

Wildlife habitat improvement programs will be carried out to help compensate for critical **winter** ranges disrupted by construction of the **Kananaskis** Highway.

The Evans-Thomas area is one of **the** largest pieces of developable land in the **Kananaskis-Spray** Sub-Region, however, it is also one of the most important wildlife areas.

The 60 unit campground west of the highway will be formalized and expanded to 150 units. The standards of this auto access campground will be similar to the Kananaskis Lakes campground and will act as a staging area for backcountry recreation in the excellent high alpine hiking areas of the upper Ribbon and Galatea Creeks. An extensive loop trail system will be developed in these valleys.

The mouth of the Evans-Thomas valley is the only site in the Kananaskis Valley suitable for a tournament-level golf course. The terrace north of Evans-Thomas Creek contains adequate acreage (about 320 acres) of developable, well-drained land. Problems such as lack of topsoil are evident but can be overcome. Other sites were considered for golf course development, namely north of Barrier Lake and three sites in Kananaskis Provincial Park, and the maximum amount of land found in any one site suitable for golf courses was 90 acres. The area south of Spray Lakes has sufficient flat land but is unavailable at the present time due to poor access.

The first Alpine Village will be developed on the terrace south of Evans-Thomas Creek. The village will contain a full range of facilities including chalets, dining areas, swimming pool, tennis courts and picnic areas as described later.

The golf course and village will be designed to minimize wildlife conflicts and allow movement of animals up and down the valley. Habitat improvement programs will be conducted in the vicinity in an attempt to compensate for loss of winter range. Recreation activities will be directed away from the upper Evans-Thomas Valley and no facilities will be located east of the Village and golf course. Hiking trails will be located away from critical wildlife areas. Cross-country ski facilities will be provided east of Kananaskis Lakes to cater to existing and future demand.

Fortress Mountain is presently developed and operated as a downhill ski resort.

All future development at Fortress Mountain will be consistent with the Alpine Village concept. Swimming pools, tennis courts and other facilities will help improve economic viability especially of summer operations.

Excellent access to the high alpine hiking areas of the Ribbon Lake and Galatea Valley exists from Fortress Mountain as an additional attraction. Trails will be constructed to these areas as part of this plan. A small Alpine Village will be located at the junction of Highway 40 and the Fortress Access Road. This will serve as the central service facility for Fortress Mountain, Evans-Thomas and Kananaskis Lakes areas being about seven miles from the last two areas. Included in this village will be a store and service station.

The Eau-Claire campground will be expanded from 22 to 50 units as part of Kananaskis Provincial Park. Trails will integrate with Fortress Mountain and other trail systems in the region.

The Kananaskis Lakes area and Smith-Dorrien Valley are being developed as part of Kananaskis Provincial Park. The following range of services and facilities will be provided to compliment other opportunities in the region.

A maximum of 500 auto-access campsites will be provided in the facility zone, east of Kananaskis Lakes and an additional 250 units in the Smith-Dorrien Valley near Mud Lake. These will be low density campgrounds with about 2 to 3 units per acre and 35 units per loop thus retaining the natural character of the area. Group camps will be provided in the Kananaskis Lakes and Burstall Lake areas.

Fully **serviced picnic** areas and informal play areas with rustic play equipment **will** be provided. A sports recreation area will be allocated in the park, and could possibly include **facilities** for tennis, baseball and soccer.

Smaller day-use areas will **be** provided in the **Smith-Dorrien** Valley.

During the winter months, the outstanding recreation potential for winter camping, **ice** fishing, snowshoeing, ski mountaineering and cross-country skiing will be realized. Snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles will not **be** permitted.

Backcountry hiking and camping opportunities will also be provided. **Backcountry travel** will be controlled by a reservation system and camping will be restricted **to** designated areas. The hiking trail system for the park will be integrated with an expanded trails system extending into the upper Elbow-Sheep area, west into the upper Spray Valley area of **Banff** National Park, over the Elk Pass into Elk Lakes Provincial Park in British Columbia and north up the Kananaskis and **Spray** Valleys. Horses will not be permitted in the Park.

A backcountry **chalet** catering to climbing enthusiasts is being considered for the **high** country west of the lakes. This facility would be accessible by **hiking** only. Future consideration will also be given to the development of similar facilities in other areas of the **Kananaskis** and **Spray** valleys.

A small cluster of cabins will be provided for special user groups including foster **parents** and the disabled. A central lodge with dining and **recreation** facilities will be included in this complex.

The mountain environment is the focal point of the park and with the exception of fishing water based activities will not be emphasized. This will avoid any conflicts developing with the use of the reservoirs for power purposes. Although boating may be permitted, low speed restrictions will be strictly enforced. Water quality will be stringently protected and fish habitat and stocking programs will be carried out to improve sport fishing.

A number of interpretive facilities will be built in the Park. As well as trails, displays, viewpoints, etc. two major interpretive and visitor centres will be built.

A number of visitor information and orientation centers are planned for Kananaskis Country. One of these may be built west of Calgary near the Bragg Creek turn off to provide information to the public on Kananaskis Country, Banff National Park, the Stoney Indian Reserve and other importunities. This could be complete with car radio messages bringing the visitor up to date information on accommodation in various campgrounds, motels, etc.

Kananaskis Provincial Park will be the operation and maintenance center for the camping and day-use facilities to the north and south .

Spray Lakes is located in a steep sided valley and with the exception of the south end the shorelands have limited potential for recreation development. Two small campsites provide 21 camping units but there is little room for expansion. The Calgary Power road west of the lake will be gated and retained for service vehicles only. Walk-in and boat-in camping will be developed along the west side of the lake.

Several staging areas will be developed along the east side of Spray Lakes to provide access to the excellent alpine hiking areas in the Upper Ribbon and Galatea valleys.

A large area of developable land at the south end of Spray Lakes Reservoir **will be considered** for a future major alpine village. In addition to the typical alpine village facilities the site is suitable for downhill skiing and a golf course. The present problem of access **will be** partially overcome with the upgrading of the **Smith-Dorrien** Road, however, **winter access from Canmore** will continue to be **hazardous** because of the very steep grade.

The Highwood Valley has **high** scenic value for motorists traveling the **Kananaskis** Highway. It is also the largest and most important elk range in the **Calgary** area. Much of this range is presently **unde-utilized** as a **result** of interference by recreation activities. Every effort **will be** made to rehabilitate this wildlife range by eliminating existing conflicts and by habitat improvement programs. To this end, camping, **snowmobiling** and the use of all terrain vehicles will be prohibited in this area. Scenic pull-offs and interpretive displays will **be** developed at a number of sites. These, however, **will be** geared to the highway **traveller** and will not encourage **backcountry use**. Present small campgrounds at Cat Creek and **Highwood #1 and #3** along with the Highwood and Strawberry group camps will **be phased** out. Highway orientated picnic areas and **interpretive displays** may be considered for these sites. Campgrounds considered for **Mist** Creek, Lineham **Meadows** and Flat (Trap) **Creek** will **not be built** because of wildlife considerations. Several **hiking trails** may be located in this area but only after a careful **evaluation** of the wildlife values. These trails will be for summer use **only as** cross country skiing and other winter activities are a **serious threat** to wintering wildlife.

Highwood House is a family operated commercial facility located at the junction of the **Forestry Trunk** Road and the Highwood Access Road. **It** contains a **cafe, grocery** store, gas station, **14** cabins and a 26 unit campground. **Due** to the above mentioned wildlife values no further expansion **will be** permitted at this site. Consistent with the Eastern **Slopes** zoning and high wildlife values **snowmobiling** will be **strictly prohibited** in this area.

Cataract Creek and Etherington Creek immediately south of Highwood Junction are sufficiently isolated from critical wildlife ranges to allow development of a variety of recreation facilities without serious conflicts. Since the road south from Highwood Junction is plowed in the winter while the road north through Highwood Pass will remain closed this is an ideal site for winter recreation facilities. Its proximity to residents south of Kananaskis Country is also important in providing balance to the overall plan.

Envisioned for this location are approximately 200 units of auto access campsites and 2 group camps some of which will be winterized. This area will also be developed for snowmobiling with facilities similar to those described for McLean Creek. Snowmobile trails connecting with Chain Lakes Provincial Park will be considered. Private enterprise will be given the opportunity to develop fixed accommodation and other services in conjunction with the snowmobile area. The Alpine Village theme will be followed for these facilities.

Elbow-Sheep Sub-Region

The Elbow-Sheep Sub-Region contains wide diversity in terms of both terrain and land use. Terrain varies from low rolling foothills in the east to high rugged mountains in the west. The eastern portion of the area supports a wide variety of land uses including forestry operations, grazing, and petroleum and natural gas developments. The western portion is largely undeveloped and important for its watershed, wildlife and wildland values. Due to the proximity to Calgary recreation pressures are extreme throughout this sub-region.

The upper Elbow-Sheep valleys will be managed to enhance the range and variety of recreation opportunities provided in Kananaskis Country. Wildland recreation uses including horseback riding, cycling and hiking will be promoted by provision of facilities for these uses.

The low passes and more tolerant vegetation of the upper Elbow-Sheep make it one of the four best areas in the province for horse-back riding along with the Castle, the Ram River and Willmore areas. Its proximity to Calgary and central Alberta makes it ideal for this use. Horse corral facilities, such as those provided at North Fork Recreation Area, will be provided to facilitate horse use of designated trails into the upper Elbow Valley via the Little Elbow, Elbow, Nihahi, Ford and Prairie valleys and the upper-Sheep valley via the Sheep, Junction, Bluerock and Gorge valleys. Backcountry campsites and horse holding facilities will be provided to prevent dispersed grazing, environmental damage and conflicts with wildlife.

Hiking will be enhanced by the development of an extensive loop trail system and designated backcountry campsites. Trails and backcountry activities will be directed away from critical wildlife ranges, especially Forget-Me-Not Mountain.

The inclusion of bicycle trails parallel to the Little Elbow and Elbow Rivers will add an exciting dimension to the wildland experience. Bicycle lock-ups will be provided at designated campsites so that equipment can be secured while the cyclist hikes the side valleys and surrounding countryside.

In order to retain the wildland character of the upper Elbow-Sheep the existing dry weather road will be gated at Bluerock and Ford Creek. The road will be maintained for management purposes and available for public use only on a permit basis to enable, for example, supplies to be transported into base camps located in the upper valley. Closure of the area to vehicular traffic along with wildlife habitat improvement programs should result in increased animal populations in the upper Elbow-Sheep. This is essential to partially offset losses anticipated as a result of increased recreation pressure in other parts of Kananaskis Country.

Ford Creek and **Bluerock** will be developed as major destination points and staging areas for the **backcountry** hiking, trail riding and cycling opportunities of the upper Elbow-Sheep to the west. Included at **these** sites will be horse corrals and loading ramps as well as traditional camping facilities.

The **Sibbald Flats**, **Gooseberry Flats**, **Paddy's Flat**, **Beaver Flats**, **Canyon Creek**, **North Fork**, **Sandy McNab**, **Prairie Creek**, **Little Elbow**, **Bragg Creek**, and **Ware** Creek areas will be developed as auto access **campground** and day use areas. Existing facilities **at some of these** locations will be upgraded as required. All camping will be restricted to **these** designated sites which have sufficient capacity to meet present **and** future demands. Use of designated sites only is essential to reduce environmental damage, fire hazard and vandalism. The size of the campgrounds will be dictated by available land.

The **Pine Grove**, **River Cove**, **Sandy McNab**, **North Fork** and **Sibbald Flats** areas will be upgraded or developed as group camp areas. Large groups will **be able** to use these facilities on a reservation basis.

The **Sibbald Flats** area will also see the development of horse corrals and loading **ramps to facilitate** day-use riding opportunities in the **Jumpingpound Valley**.

The **Moose Mountain-Canyon Creek area** represents one of the most concentrated assemblages of interpretive features in the province. Of specific **interest** are caves, **periglacial features**, **fossil beds**, **sulphur** springs, canyons, **geological** formations and vegetation which lend **themselves** to excellent interpretive programs on alternative **natural history** themes. To optimize the use of these resources, a large interpretive centre will be constructed and **operated** by Parks **in** the vicinity of Elbow Falls. Since the area is in **close** proximity to Calgary, the school system may take great advantage of these resources for environmental education. For the general public, **the** interpretive complex will **be** accompanied by guided **interpretive** walks **and** bus tours.

McLean Creek is now popular for snowmobiling and all-terrain vehicle use. This use will be confined to this area where it can be adequately controlled. Considerable expansion of both the group and auto-access campgrounds will occur to provide a year round staging area for the use of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles throughout the McLean Creek valley bordered by Quirk and Threepoint Creeks, the Forest Reserve Boundary and the Ranger Creek Valley to the north. Trail links to a staging area at Sibbald Flats will be provided. The use of off-highway vehicles in the Prime Protection and Critical Wildlife zones adjacent to this area is contrary to the intent of the Eastern Slopes zoning and will be prohibited and strictly enforced. A second major snowmobile area will also be provided north of Highway #1 in the Waiparous Creek area.

The Bragg Creek Youth Hostel is now nearing completion and will be in use this season providing 64 beds. Recreational activities associated with the hostel will include hiking, trail riding, canoeing and orienteering.

Bragg Creek Provincial Park will be further developed to provide short stay and day-use opportunities for the people of the Calgary area and as a staging area for auto-touring in the Bow Forest on weekends during the summer months.

The upper Bragg Creek valley is a popular cross-country skiing area and can be adequately serviced for winter use by the Youth Hostel and the Provincial Park. The Park will remain open for winter camping. The existing operational and maintenance facilities in the park will be used as an operational center for the McLean Creek snowmobiling area and the other campgrounds to the west.

RECREATION TRAILS

Kananaskis Country provides some of the finest opportunities for development of trail systems in Alberta. Trails are an integral part of the overall recreation plan and will link the numerous facilities being developed. The diversity of terrain provides the opportunity for construction of trails for a variety of users including hikers, **horse** riders, cyclists, cross-country **skiers**, snowshoers and snowmobiles. Trails will be developed to cater to those wishing long trips into the backcountry as well as visitors desiring a short leisurely stroll. Trail construction will be to those standards necessary to protect the environment and **provide an enjoyable, safe experience** for the user. In areas of high use and sensitive terrain standards will include well surfaced treads, culverts and bridges. Where levels of use are lower and terrain more resistant less stringent standards will be adopted. In many instances the various types of users will be restricted to separate trails to avoid conflicts.

All trails will be constructed with protection of the environment as a primary goal. Sensitive wildlife habitats will be avoided wherever possible and winter uses will be directed away from critical winter ranges. By concentrating visitors on these carefully planned and well constructed trails environmental damage will be greatly reduced and wildlife conflicts minimized.

In total about 1000 km of trails will be constructed in Kananaskis Country.

Hiking Trails

Hiking trails will vary from short, easily strolled paths leading to excellent views or points of interest to long, difficult alpine routes traversing glaciers and snowcapped mountains. Numerous short trails will be located in close proximity to campgrounds and points of interest along the roads. In addition to connecting various facilities such as

campsites and Alpine Villages many of these will be self-guiding nature walks. Some of the more prominent interpretative trails will be in the Kananaskis Lakes, Moose Mountain and Highwood Pass areas. A number of long distance hiking trails affording extended stays in the backcountry will be developed. The Ribbon Lake area and Galatea Creek valley provide excellent opportunities for hiking in the high alpine zone amidst spectacular mountain scenery. Traversable mountain passes provide access to the Spray Lakes and Smith-Dorrien valleys and south to Fortress Mountain creating high potential for loop trail development. A wide variety of alternative loop trails will be provided in these valleys. Linear trails will extend south adjacent to the Kananaskis River and the Opal Range to link with the trail system in the Kananaskis Lakes area. Trails will also be considered north along the Kananaskis River to Barrier Lake, northwest through the Wind Creek valley and over Mount Allen to Pigeon Mountain in the Canmore Corridor. Unless routes can be selected that avoid conflict with wintering elk and sheep the trail through the Wind Creek valley will be restricted to summer use. Designated campsites will be located away from important wildlife summer ranges.

Long distance hiking and wildland camping opportunities will be developed in the spectacular alpine country west of Kananaskis Lakes. As well as serving the park, the trails will extend across the Continental Divide via the north and south Kananaskis passes, the Elk Pass and the Burstall Pass to provide access to the Palliser Valley and Elk Lakes Provincial Park in B.C. and Banff National Park. The system of trails and campsites will also be built to high standards to accommodate the anticipated heavy levels of use and to protect the natural values of the area. Horse use will not be permitted on these trails.

Expanded campground and road-side staging facilities in the Highwood valley will promote use of a slightly expanded and substantially upgraded trail system providing access west to the continental divide and east into the Misty and Highwood Ranges. Trail access from the Kananaskis and Highwood valleys into the upper Elbow-Sheep valleys is provided via Elbow pass and Ricker's pass at the head of Mist Creek Valley.

These will be summer only trails thus avoiding conflicts with wintering wildlife.

Numerous trail circuits and **backcountry** camping opportunities will be developed in the upper Elbow-Sheep area. Routes along the Elbow and Little Elbow River will connect with the numerous campgrounds and Moose Mountain interpretive center to the east.

Horse Trails

Horse trails will be developed throughout the Elbow-Sheep sub-region with shorter circuits associated with the dude ranches in the Canmore sub-region. Horse use will not be permitted in the **Kananaskis-Spray** sub-region due to sensitive terrain and wildlife considerations. The higher tolerance of the vegetation and low mountain passes make the Elbow-Sheep sub-region one of the best locations for trail riding in a mountain setting in Alberta. An extensive trail system including **staging** areas, loading ramps, **backcountry** campsites and corrals will be developed to make this excellent resource readily available to the people of Alberta. Ford Creek and **Bluerock** will be developed as the main staging areas and numerous loop circuits will be located in the **backcountry** to the west. Permits will be issued for the use of the gated Elbow-Sheep service road to allow feed and supplies to be transported to designated campsites. This will allow groups the opportunity of extended **stays** in a **backcountry** setting without the necessity of **packhorses**. Grazing of horses will not be permitted to reduce environmental damage and competition with wildlife.

Clay-use **trail riding** opportunities will be developed in the **Sibbald Flats - Jumpingpound Creek** area. Consideration will be given to a **commercial** trail riding operation in this vicinity.

Bicycle Trails

The development of approximately 250 km of bicycle trails adds to the diversity and balance of recreation opportunity available in Kananaskis Country and provides for a truly unique experience not available elsewhere in Canada's Mountain Parks. Cycle trails will be asphalt surface and of two main types; those provided as a bikelane along the roads and those developed as separate trails. These trails for the exclusive use of cyclists will allow full enjoyment of the peace and tranquility of the mountains without the distraction and dangers created by motorized traffic.

Four major bikeways will be developed in the Kananaskis Region: the Kananaskis Valley Trail, the Calgary - Sibbald Flats Trail, the Elbow - Little Elbow Trail and the Smith - Dorrien - Canmore Trail. These four major routes will allow extended tours along several loop circuits. Shorter trails will connect these major routes with the numerous campsites, Alpine villages and interpretative opportunities. Bicycle rentals will be available at a number of key locations such as Bow Valley Provincial Park, Evans-Thomas Alpine Village, Kananaskis Lakes and Moose Mountain permitting pleasant family outings on a day trip basis.

The Kananaskis Valley trail will extend 55 km from Bow Valley Provincial Park to Kananaskis Lake following in part the old road along the west side of the Kananaskis River. Most of the route will be away from the highway and short connector trails will provide easy access to the numerous campgrounds and Alpine Villages along the Kananaskis Valley. Parking facilities will be provided in Bow Valley park for those wishing to motor to this point.

The **Calgary-Sibbald Flats Trail** will provide a bicycle route from the **outskirts** of Calgary to **Barrier Lake**. The first 22 km of this 65 km trail will be developed as a four foot lane along Highway 559 scheduled for construction from Calgary to Bragg Creek. From this point the trail will be a four foot lane along the **Sibbald Flats road** and will be part of the road construction program. This route will connect with the **Kananaskis Valley Trail** north of **Barrier Lake**.

The **Elbow-Trail** a route of about 70 km will leave the **Calgary-Sibbald Flats Trail** near **Bragg Creek** be developed as a four foot lane in **conjunction** with the upgrading of the **Elbow Road** to **Ford Creek**. This will provide cycle access to the **Moose Mountain Interpretive Centre** and numerous campgrounds.

From **Ford Creek** the trail will parallel the **Little Elbow River** then back along the **Elbow River**, a distance of 35 km. The dry weather road through this area will be closed to all but service vehicles. This will permit the cyclist as well as the horse rider and hiker to camp in designated backcountry campsites well away from the influence of the automobile. Bicycle lock-ups will be provided at these campsites so that equipment can be secured while the cyclist hikes the side valleys and surrounding countryside. This will provide a unique experience not easily duplicated elsewhere in the **Eastern Slopes**.

The **Elbow-Sheep trail** will connect with the **Kananaskis Highway** via **Elbow Pass**, allowing the cyclist a number of circuits.

Smith-Dorrien-Canmore Trail, a 50 km route, will parallel the **Smith-Dorrien Road** from **Kananaskis Lake** to **Canmore** and be developed as part of the road. This trail will permit the cyclist to complete the circle back to **Bow Valley Provincial Park** using either **Highway 1** or **1A**. The feasibility of a separate bikeway for this stretch will be investigated.

Cross-Country Ski Trails

An extensive system of cross-country ski trails **will be developed in Kananaskis Provincial Park east of the lakes. These will be associated with winterized campsites, warm up shelters and interpretative programs.** It is expected that the majority of the cross-country **skiers** in the **Kananaskis** Valley will use these trails. A smaller network **of** trails will be developed near **Bragg** Creek Provincial Park and the Moose Mountain Interpretative Center where winterized facilities will also be provided. A number of individual trails **will be developed at various locations; these will all be directed away from critical wildlife winter ranges.**

Snowmobile Trails

The *use* of snowmobiles **in Kananaskis** Country will be confined to the McLean Creek area with a connecting link to a smaller staging area at **Sibbald** Flats. Trails will be well developed and maintained and warm up shelters will be provided. Winterized campsites will be located at **McLean Creek.**

Additional snowmobile areas **will** be developed at **Waiparous** Creek, north of the **Trans** Canada Highway and near Cataract and Etherington Creeks south of **Highwood** Junction.

CAMPGROUNDS

Multi-Use Auto Access

Except for Bragg Creek, McLean Creek and Kananaskis Lakes where winterized campsites will be **provided** all campgrounds in Kananaskis Country will be developed to the same basic standards. Standards will include such items as centralized hand pump water, vault pit **pumpout** toilets, gravel roads, individual multipurpose designated campsites, stoves, etc. Standardization of these items will simplify design and construction and will greatly **reduce** costs by permitting large contracts.

Although some of the campgrounds will be relatively large densities will be low, usually about 2 or 3 units per acre, with about 35 units per 1000 thus retaining the natural character of the area. The following table indicates the planned capacity of each campsite. Actual numbers may vary from this depending upon terrain conditions and sight design.

AUTO ACCESS CAMPGROUNDS

	No. of Units	Size After Expansion and/or Upgrading
<u>Canmore Sub-Region</u>		
Lac des Arcs	37	37
Dead Man's Flat	32	32
Bow River	41	41
Bow Valley Provincial Park	235	400
<u>Kananaskis - Spray Sub-Region</u>		
Evans-Thomas	59	150
Eau Claire	22	50
Spray Lakes	21	21
Kananaskis Lakes	30	500
Cat Creek	23	0
Highwood #1 and #3	17	0
Mud Lake	0	240
Cataract Creek	10	200
<u>Elbow - Sheep Sub-Region</u>		
Sibbald Flats	94	150
Gooseberry Flats	35	
Paddy's Flat	37	1;
Beaver Flats	19	19
McLean Creek	0	200
Ford Creek	0	200
Canyon Creek	0	100
North Fork	24	24
Sandy McNab	26	150
Bluerock	23	60
Prairie Creek	0	25
Little Elbow	0	25
Bragg Creek	0	25
Ware Creek	0	
Bragg Creek Provincial Park	37	1;
Waiparous Creek	<u>36</u>	<u>200</u>
	858	3118

Group Camps

Group camps will also be constructed to common standards and will be located as follows.

	Existing	Total
Evans-Thomas	1	2
Kananaskis Lakes	0	2
Burstaff Lakes	0	2
Highwood	1	0
Strawberry	1	0
Pine Grove	1	2
River Cove	1	2
Sandy McNab	1	2
North Fork	2	2
Cataract	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
	8	16

ACCESS CONSIDERATION

The road infrastructure is an integral part **of** the plan for **Kananaskis** Country and a network will be developed that will ensure adequate access to the numerous facilities and spectacular scenery. From developed access **points** the visitor will **be** able to enjoy the solitude of the backcountry on foot, horse back, bicycle, or cross-country skis. All motor vehicles will be confined to the designated roads to protect this solitude and enhance the enjoyment of the visitor.

Although no new roads will be built and in fact a number of existing truck trails will be reclaimed auto access will be greatly improved by upgrading existing roads. **Most** roads will have a basic design speed of between 60 and 80 km per hour and will eventually be surfaced for safe easy driving and to reduce dust. Roads will be carefully designed and constructed to maximize the enjoyment of the beautiful **scenery while minimizing damage to the environment.**

Although all roads will not be completed within the five year time span of this plan, upgrading will keep pace with development of recreation facilities **to** ensure **adequate** access. The following is a brief description of individual segments of the road system.

The **Kananaskis** Highway will be surfaced to the **Kananaskis** Lakes by the summer of **1978 to** coincide with the completion of the first major campground and related facilities. High levels of recreation traffic generated by **Kananaskis** Provincial Park will necessitate upgrading and redevelopment of the **Kananaskis** Highway to Highwood Junction as a **high** priority. A portion of the route from the Lakes to Highwood Pass will be realigned to avoid the steep switch back and provide safe travel for larger numbers of vehicles. Portions of the old road will be retained as scenic overlooks and access to interpretative **displays**. The realignment and grading of this road will be **completed** within *the* five year duration of this plan. This

will allow" easy access to **Kananaskis** Provincial Park for visitors from Lethbridge and other parts of southern Alberta. **It will** also provide an attractive circuit route back to Calgary via Turner Valley. The portion of the road from Highwood Junction through **Highwood** Pass will be closed during the winter **months**.

The **Smith-Dorrien** Road will be upgraded as part of the plan for **Kananaskis** Country. A very high priority is also placed on the realignment of the connection between the **Smith-Dorrien** Valley and the **Kananaskis** Highways. This is necessary so the existing road can be removed from the top of the Calgary Power Dam at the north end of Lower Kananaskis Lake. The present alignment also conflicts with campgrounds and day-use facilities under construction at this location. Upgrading of the remainder of the **Smith-Dorrien** road will be completed to allow access and development of the recreation opportunities of Smith-Dorrien and Spray Lakes valleys in accordance with **this** plan. Major upgrading of the very steep three mile section south of Canmore **for** winter use is not planned at this time. Present upgrading **of** this road will be a gravelled surface.

The **Sibbald Flats-Kananaskis** Road from **Sibbald** Flats west to the **Kananaskis** Highway will be upgraded as part of the plan for Kananaskis Country. Secondary 541 from Calgary will connect with the **Sibbald** Flats road **as** land is acquired. This **will** provide an alternative scenic route to the Kananaskis valley and will allow easy integration of the recreation facilities in the **Sibbald** Flats area with the **rest** of the region.

The Elbow Road from the junction of Highway 22 south of Bragg Creek to the junction **of** the **Sibbald** Flats-Ford Creek Road is reasonably good for limited recreational travel with the exception of the last 5 mile section near the **Sibbald** Flats-Ford **Creek** Road. This

road will be upgraded to suitable **standards** to provide adequate access **to** the recreational facilities proposed for the **Elbow River Valley**. **The first 13 miles of the road follows the Elbow River and will require little regrading** except at **Mosse** Dome Creek where a major realignment **is** required to improve standards. Base course and paving will be considered at an early stage on the first 13 miles because of the current heavy use being made of this road by recreational traffic. The **last** 5 miles will require realignment and reconstruction **to** bring it up to an acceptable standard for all-round public use.

The Sibbald Flats-Ford Creek Road will be upgraded to provide vehicular travel between **Sibbald** Flats and the Elbow River. This road will also add a valuable circular scenic route to the road system in the region. The existing road **is** not recommended for general public recreational travel until reconstruction is undertaken. Upgrading will begin in the later part of this plan.

The Elbow-Sheep Road, a dry weather truck trail along the Little Elbow River and Sheep Creek will be retained as a **gated** dry weather service road. General public access will not be permitted on this road. These **restrictions are necessary to protect the environment and wildlife values as well as maintaining the integrity of this wildland** area thus enhancing the range of recreation opportunities available in **Kananaskis** Country.

UTILITY OPERATIONAL SERVICING

Since the excellent recreation resources of the area are based on the natural environment it is essential that all utility **services be of the highest standards to protect these values for present and future generations.** Technology exists to provide utility services with a minimum impact on the environment but cost will be comparatively **high** because of rugged yet sensitive **terrain.**

Before any major development is approved the alternatives and costs of providing the following services will be determined.

Water Supply

The availability of an adequate water supply of acceptable quality is essential. Ground water is the preferred source and can be expected to be of acceptable quality except for some locations near **Moose Mountain** where heavily mineralized springs occur. **High yield** wells can be expected in **some** locations but surface water will need to be used in other areas. Shallow wells and surface water may require chlorination and filtration.

Sanitary Sewage Treatment and Disposal

Sanitary **sewage** treatment and disposal must meet very high standards throughout the region. Although septic tanks and subsurface disposal fields may be acceptable in some low use areas sophisticated tertiary treatment plants **will be** required for major developments. In some **instances one treatment plant may serve a number of developments,** for example, **major** facilities at Evans-Thomas, Fortress Mountain and **Kananaskis** Lakes as well as a number of smaller sites.

Solid Waste Management

Sanitary landfill is **an unacceptable** method of solid waste disposal in an area of such high natural values because of visual impact and bear management problems. The alternatives are **incineration** or trucking to the Calgary City Dump. Incineration **is** the best alternative for **Kananaskis Provincial Park** and sites are **being** investigated that can also be used by the surrounding developments. The possibility of a solid waste disposal system to serve **Banff, Canmore** and the **Kananaskis** valley will also be considered.

Regional Administration and Maintenance Centres

To effectively administer and operate the recreation facilities and services in **Kananaskis** Country, a regional administration/operations office **will be** developed in the Canmore Corridor. Such a complex will house the necessary regional staff of the involved government departments. Several maintenance **centres will** also be developed in conjunction with the sub-region operations and management programs, particularly in Bragg Creek, Bow Valley **and Kananaskis Provincial Parks.**

ALPINE VILLAGE CONCEPT

Fixed overnight accommodation in Kananaskis Country will be provided by a number of small alpine villages rather than one or two large service centers that would tend to mushroom into urban areas such as "Banff Townsite" with all the attendant problems. The emphasis of the villages will be to provide equal access to all Albertans in dispersed rather than concentrated centers thus ensuring the retention of the natural setting. A typical village will contain a variety of accommodation centered around common recreation facilities.

The villages will be linked by hiking and cross-country ski trails and will be in close proximity to campgrounds and other day use facilities. Although the size and range of the villages will by necessity, vary with the availability of developable land at each proposed location, a typical village will contain the following components:

- 1 to 4 chalets of 20 to 40 units
- 1 swimming pool
- 4 tennis courts
- 4 handball/squash courts
- dining and lounge facilities
- day use picnicking and parking facilities
- open space play area and connecting trails

Design standards for the villages will be complementary with the environment and building controls and utility services will be to the highest possible standards.

Since campgrounds require relatively large tracks of level land they will be located near but not in the village. Day use parking and picnic areas associated with the village sport facilities will ensure access for the campers; trails and roads will link the campgrounds with the sports facilities.

The walk-up chalets in the above concept will contain up to 40 units, some with cooking facilities. In some instances portions of these chalets may be developed as "Recreational Townhouse Units" available for sale on a non-permanent residency basis as outlined in the "policy For Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes". These units will be available for rent by the village manager when not in use by the owner.

Detached cottage sites will not be considered in most of the villages due to severe terrain restriction and utility servicing problems. In no circumstances will permanent residency be permitted as this would lead to the need for schools and other costly infra-structure requirements. Consistent with this plan most staff housing will be provided in the Canmore Corridor with only essential staff located on the site.

The above concept is based on the maximum village size and is programmed for the Evans-Thomas area in conjunction with the golf course and campground already proposed for that location. Other villages may be smaller as terrain conditions dictate.

Future developments surrounding the Fortress Mountain Ski Resort will be programmed to fit into this village concept. Several chalets, a swimming pool and tennis courts could be added to the existing facilities.

Facilities at the junction of the Kananaskis Highway and the Fortress Access road will include a family operated store/restaurant/service station complex as previously described to service the area. Fifteen to twenty cabins or alternatively a chalet, will be provided at this location. These developments will occupy most of the useable land precluding large sport facilities and campgrounds, however, this site is in close proximity to the Fortress and Evans-Thomas facilities.

With the exception of the golf course, a village similar to that outlined for the Evans-Thomas will be constructed north of Barrier Lake. The knoll between the highway and the east side of Barrier Lake provides an extremely attractive location for a chalet and will be developed with limited sport facilities on a smaller scale as part of the North Barrier Village.

Plans for **Evans-Thomas**, **Fortress Junction** and **Barrier Lake** will commence immediately. Proceeding with these three **will** facilitate a critical evaluation, allowing **future** programmed to proceed **with** maximum **efficiency** and benefits.

A decision to proceed with future **Alpine Villages** will be based on the **success of the first** three villages. Sites will be selected on the basis of environmental suitability, compatibility with wildlife values and overall integration with other recreation opportunities constructed as part of this plan.

Kananaskis Country

Update

NO. 2 JULY 1978

Kananaskis Country is the first major mountainland recreation region to be developed by the Province of Alberta. The area encompasses 3,200 square kilometers (1,920 square miles) of prime recreation land located in the foothills and mountains southwest of Calgary, including three of Alberta's Provincial Parks. The development of Kananaskis Country is scheduled over a five year period. This year, 1978, marks the second year of development. The following information is provided as a report on the project's status, area conditions and recreation opportunities.

EXISTING FACILITIES

- 235 auto campsites are available at Bow Valley Provincial Park.
- 60 auto campsites are available at the Evan Thomas Campground in the Lower Kananaskis Valley.
- 37 auto campsites are available at Bragg Creek Provincial Park.
- Alberta Forest Service campgrounds in Kananaskis Country are open and serviceable.
- the Barrier Lake Kananaskis Country Information Centre is now open.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

- Development is underway throughout Kananaskis Country. Several camping facilities and visitor service buildings are recurrently under construction in preparation for the 1979 camping season. Major construction projects for the balance of 1978 include:
 - Eau Claire Campground and Day Use Area (temporarily closed for upgrading and expansion)
 - Elkwood Campground (to open in 1979)
 - Canyon Campground and Day Use Area (closed occasionally as required by construction).
 - Interlake Day Use Area (to open in 1979)
 - Kananaskis Provincial Park Visitor Centre (to open in 1979)
- Roads being constructed and upgraded throughout the 1978 summer include:
 - Highway 40 from the Kananaskis Provincial Park entrance to Highwood. (The project includes hard surfacing and minor deviations from original alignments to ensure public safety)

- Ten miles of the Smith- Dorrien Road within the boundary of Kananaskis Provincial Park beginning south of Spray Lakes. (The project has closed this section of road during the 1978 summer season for surveying, designing and upgrading the existing right-of-way)
- Several back-country trails are presently being planned for future development.

RECOMMENDED USE AREAS

- Bow Valley Provincial Park provides a wide range of visitor facilities.
- Bragg Creek Provincial Park offers well maintained campsites and day use areas.
- The forestry campgrounds in the Elbow Area provide excellent recreational opportunities.
- Interpretive programs are available at Kananaskis and Bow Valley Provincial Parks and at the Kananaskis Experimental Station.
- Excellent fishing opportunities are available at the Spray and Kananaskis Lakes.

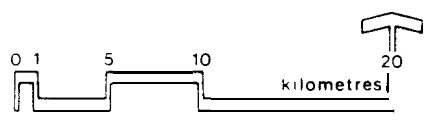
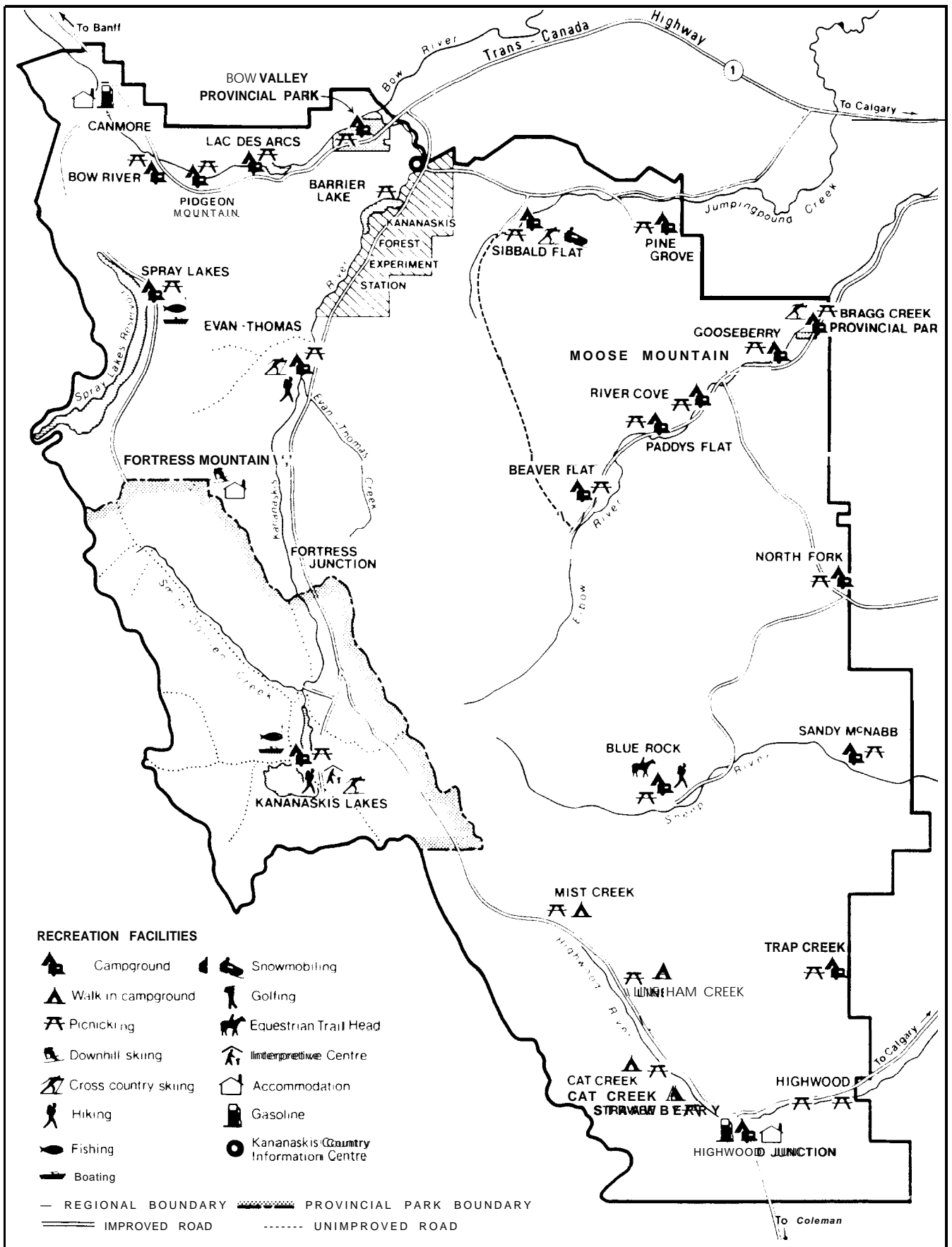
HUNTING

Those interested in hunting opportunities in Kananaskis Country should check the Summary of Bird Game Regulations and Summary of Big Game Regulations printed by Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife. (1978 Big Game Regulations are now available and Bird Game Regulations will be available shortly.)

Watch for further reports as developments proceed in Kananaskis Country.

Kananaskis Country Update is printed regularly as a report on development conditions and recreation opportunities.


GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA



KANANASKIS COUNTRY RECREATION AREA