


**ADVICE TO DEPUTY MINISTER  
For Meeting**

**PURPOSE**

- To support a meeting with the Deputy Minister (DM) of Environment and Protected Areas (EPA) about all-season resorts (ASR), land-use planning and Kananaskis Whitewater.

**MEETING DETAILS**

<b>Meeting Date and Time</b>	<b>Tuesday, June 24, 2025 at 9-9:30 a.m.</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>44 Capital Boulevard, 10044 - 108 Street, 3rd floor</b>
<b>Attendee</b>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stephanie Clarke, DM, EPA</li> <li>• Former DM of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction</li> <li>• Former DM of Affordability and Utilities, and associate DM of Natural Gas and Utilities</li> <li>• Twitter/X: none found</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda Items/Discussion Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All-Season Resorts</li> <li>• Kananaskis Whitewater</li> <li>• Other cross-departmental items identified by DMs</li> </ul>
<b>Ministry Representative(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None requested</li> </ul>

**KEY DISCUSSION POINTS**

- The Ministry of Tourism and Sport (TS) looks forward to continued support from EPA on implementation of the All-Season Resorts Act (ASRA) – including establishing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for our collaboration – and on land-use planning, Indigenous consultation, and other subject matter advice (Attachment 1).
- TS is supporting EPA on an agreement to enable continued tourism/recreation whitewater opportunities on the Kananaskis River for the 2025 summer season.

**BACKGROUND**

- In areas that are designated, TS will be the sole regulator under the *Public Lands Act*, *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and the *Water Act*. This establishes TS as another land and resource regulatory in addition to EPA, Forestry and Parks (FP) and the Alberta Energy Regulator.
  - First Nations Consultation is underway for the initial ASR areas of Fortress, Nakiska, Castle, and Silvertip Gondola. EPA has been engaged on the proposals.
  - TS' department staff have been in discussions with EPA executives about the implementation of the ASR program since February 2025.
    - DMs and Assistant Deputy Ministers from EPA, FP, TS, and Indigenous Relations met on April 7, 2025, and agreed to collaborate. This includes working with EPA to develop an MOU to clarify roles, ensure regulatory consistency, and create a framework for subject matter expert support for ASR designation/developments.

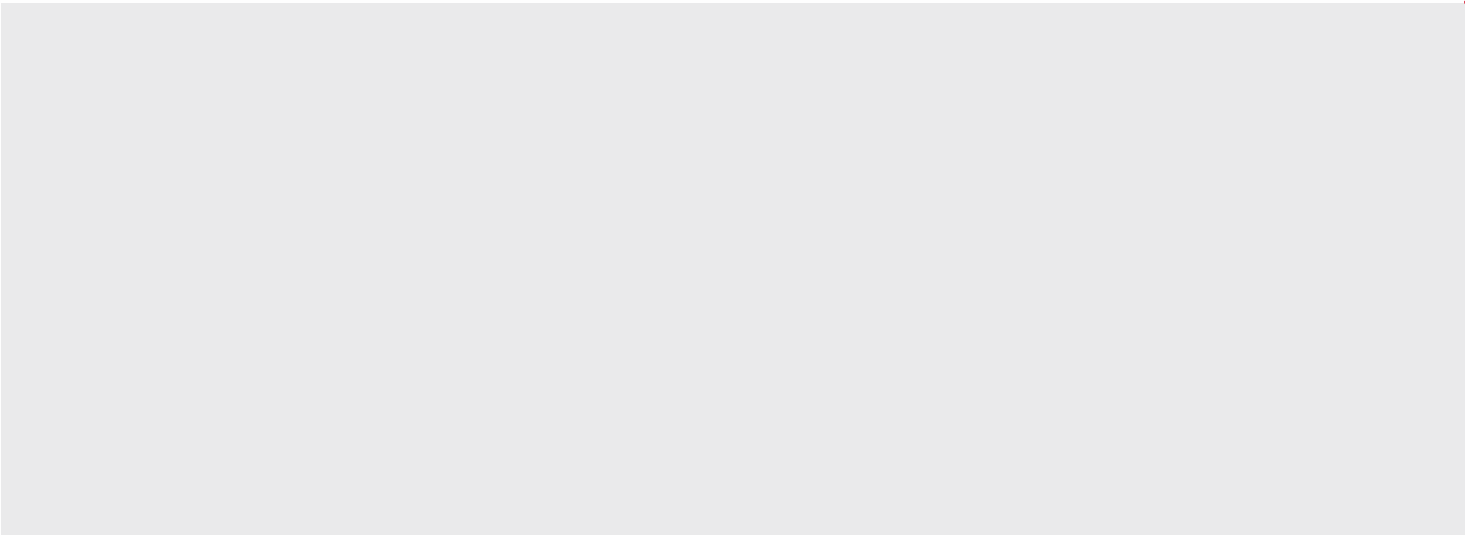
**ANALYSIS**

All-Season Resorts

- EPA has previously raised concerns about how ASR will align with water management priorities, especially in light of recent droughts in southern Alberta. DM Clarke also asked whether this alignment could delay project approvals. These concerns are addressed via the following mechanisms:
  - Interdepartmental MOUs will define roles and responsibilities to ensure efficient collaboration between departments. They will cover regulatory system alignment, subject matter advice, Indigenous consultation, legislation/policy alignment, planning, and technical support (e.g., Geographic Information System).
  - Statutory Timelines: ASRA will implement statutory timelines requiring decisions within six months. Some resort projects have faced multi-year delays awaiting decisions from EPA and FP. ASRA will streamline processes and improve predictability.
  - Water Management During Droughts: TS will share water management responsibilities at resorts, similar to the Alberta Energy Regulator with oil and gas. However, EPA will retain overall accountability for the water management system. All TS decisions must align with statutory plans, such as the South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan, and adhere to water-sharing agreements and priority administration protocols established by EPA.

Inter-Departmental Coordination on ASR

- Multiple meetings are scheduled with EPA divisions to provide staff additional information and clarity on the role of the ASR branch and to develop MOUs. Initial meetings with EPA were positive and EPA is supportive of the approach to develop the MOUs.
- MOUs will ensure that key subject matter advice important to the natural resource objectives for EPA are considered in the decision making by the ASR regulator (e.g., fish and wildlife, water quality, air quality, drinking water standards cumulative effects, etc.). MOUs will be finalized by October 2025 and approved at the DM level.



**ATTACHMENT**

1. Additional information related to Environment and Protected Areas

**CONTACT:** Paul Lamoureux, ADM – Sport, Tourism and Recreation, 780-422-1031

## Additional Background information related to Environment and Protected Areas

### Land-Use Planning

- Integrating commercial tourism, recreation, and all-season resort (ASR) priorities into regional and sub-regional planning is paramount if the Government of Alberta (GoA) wishes to attract private capital into the development of new or enhanced tourism products across the province.
- Commercial tourism and recreation are not mentioned in most land-use plans to the same extent as other industries, frequently leading to major projects being rejected or deprioritized by GoA decision makers.
- For the past year, Environment and Protected Areas (EPA) has engaged Albertans on whether or not they should open the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) for revisions as part of its 10-year review.
  - Tourism and Sport's department staff have participated heavily in this engagement process and brought many stakeholders into the sessions and surveys. TS recommends that the SSRP be opened for revisions to strengthen the prioritization of tourism and recreation in the region.
- Additionally, TS has supported development of and public engagement for the Upper Smoky Sub-Regional Plan (USSRP) which covers northern mountain regions such as Grande Cache.
  - The draft USSRP has four new areas zoned for commercial tourism development and additional areas zoned for increased recreation. However, TS has concerns that EPA may seek to designate these areas under the *Provincial Parks Act* in the future, which would sterilize the lands and negate the intention of increasing tourism and recreation on the landscape.
    - Additionally, no ASR areas are designated in the draft USSRP, although EPA has expressed an interest in adding some for future drafts.
- TS department staff have been in discussion with EPA Land Planning and Land Use Secretariat to ensure alignment of ASR objectives in existing and new land use plans. This includes updates to the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan as part of its 10-year review.

### Nature Strategy

- EPA has a mandate to develop a Nature Strategy to harness Alberta's nature for economic and social opportunity.
  - If written with actionable policy and regulatory commitments, supported by relevant and measurable Key Performance Indicators, the Nature Strategy has the potential to become a powerful tool to unlock growth of Alberta's visitor economy.
- TS has supported the development of the Nature Strategy and has brought stakeholders into the engagement process.
  - It is important for the Nature Strategy to reflect commercial tourism and recreation priorities so that the Strategy can advance the growth of the sector rather than be used against it.