

May 15, 2020

Chuck Lee
Executive Director, Alberta Whitewater Association (AWA)
admin@albertawhitewater.ca

Dear Chuck Lee:

Thank you very much your May 1, 2020 letter regarding the partnership process for restructuring Alberta Parks. I am pleased to respond on behalf of Minister Jason Nixon.

I appreciate the time the AWA and its members took to develop the letter and provided list of the prioritized list of critical sites. I have shared this work with my staff for their consideration as we continue to build out the details for the partnership process.

I value the positive and successful history of our organizations as partners and acknowledge that the announcement to restructure our parks system likely raised some questions. We will be taking the appropriate time to create productive partnerships that will deliver outstanding recreation experiences, benefit air, land, water and biodiversity, support our economy and create new opportunities. As such, we are developing an expression of interest process for these sites and anticipate process of about 3 years to achieve successful agreements. More information will be available towards the end of May. I encourage you to visit <https://albertaparks.ca/working-together> and sign up for our partnership distribution list.

I am pleased to clarify that parks are not for sale; our intention is to create productive and voluntary partnerships with many different types of organizations. As you have highlighted, Alberta Parks has a long history of building successful partnerships.

Government is open to considering different types of partnership models that work for willing municipalities, Indigenous communities, community groups and non-profits, as well as direct volunteer involvement opportunities with the department. To your point, many of the Provincial Recreation Areas identified for partnership opportunities already fall under an existing facility operator agreement. Where successful partnerships exists, these are highly valued and will be maintained.

The majority of the sites identified for partnership opportunities will be operated for the 2020 season. Sites identified for closure this season will remain open and accessible for responsible use and recreation – except areas where aging infrastructure presents a safety risk. Once safety risks are addressed, these areas will reopen. If a site shifts to a public lands management model, recreation and conservation will remain important values. There are existing tools under the *Public Lands Act*, such as a public land use zone designation. You can find more information at www.alberta.ca by searching for “public land use zones.”

I would be interested in meeting with you over the phone to learn more about the AWA’s partnership ideas, including for the Barrier Lake Visitor Information Center. To schedule a call, please have your office reach out to Shannon Fowler, Executive Assistant, at shannon.fowler@gov.ab.ca or at (780) 643-9233.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Fernandez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Fernandez
Assistant Deputy Minister
Parks Operations Division

cc: Minister Jason Nixon, Environment and Parks