

Bow River Access Below the AEP Carseland Weir.

Recreational river use has expanded in recent years with the Bow River downstream of Calgary to Carseland having some of the highest concentration of riverboats in Alberta. As riverboat use increased, the world-renowned trout fishery has declined. Just what the increased river use has had on the trout population is open to debate, but more anglers will see more pressure on the fishery resulting in possible declining fish populations. Therefore, Calgary River Users' Alliance (CRUA) together with our member organizations have advanced the position that expanding river access to a greater portion of the Bow River will reduce pressure on the fishery as well as spreading out recreational river use.

The Bow River downstream of the Carseland Weir has the potential to absorb pressure from upstream recreational river use, but improved river access is needed. Historically, several casual river access points have been used by the jet-boat community to access and float the river downstream, returning to the put-in point at the end of the day Take-out points further downstream have been problematic due to the Indian Reserve Property, but it is hoped that river access sites can be negotiated in the future. Four river access sites have been identified between the Carseland Weir and Highway-24 that have either been used in the past or have potential for development into designated public access sites (Figure 1).



Figure 1

Currently, none of the river access sites are available to the public. **Site A** was closed in 2013. **Site B** was used up until the fall of 2020 when it was closed due to liability issues. **Site C** has a designated boat ramp for water management service needs for the Carseland Weir. And **Site D** has limited river access potential under low flow conditions without substantial infrastructure investment.

Site C has the greatest potential for public river access with the agreement by both Alberta Parks with access through the Wyndham-Carseland PP Day Use Area and by AEP Water Management Group to use the boat ramp.

This document reviews the site access and improvements needed to gain access to the boat ramp. A site visit was made on March 08, 2021, by members of the river user community to get a better understanding of the site and its potential for public river access. The site visit review follows:

Figure 2: The Wyndham-Carseland Day Use Area is accessed off Highway #24 just south of the Bow River. The road is gravel-based and serves as a return from the park campsites as well as access to the public use area. There is a vegetation barrier between the road and camping sites that reduces vehicle noise for campers. More open campsites are available closer to the day-use area but not close to the road. Therefore truck/boat trailer use has a negligible impact on current park use.



Figure 2 Park Day Use Road Access

Figure 3: The Day Use Area is well serviced by 40 designated parking stalls that are adequate in length for truck/trailer parking. An abundance of toilets, park benches and garbage bins make this location very desirable for a river access site. Immediate use of the site will likely not exceed 6 trailered boats each day, therefore we see little interference with day-use visitors.



Figure 3: Park Day Use Area

Figure 4: Access from the parking lot to the gravel-based pathway and an expansion of the pathway width to accommodate vehicle use to the boat ramp will be needed.



Figure 4: Access from the parking lot to the roadway allowance

Figure 5: The area between the park property and the boat ramp may need only minor improvements considering the limited amount of vehicle use. A gravel base that currently exists may need to be expanded in the future if damage is seen. A gated entrance to this portion of the property may be advisable to close access to the boat ramp under adverse weather and high river flow conditions.



Figure 5: Staging Area.

Figure 6: The boat ramp is functional but may need the upper portions of the gravel base packed to make it more durable. If in the future river access increases interlocking concrete slabs should be considered to better protect the boat ramp base.



Discussion:

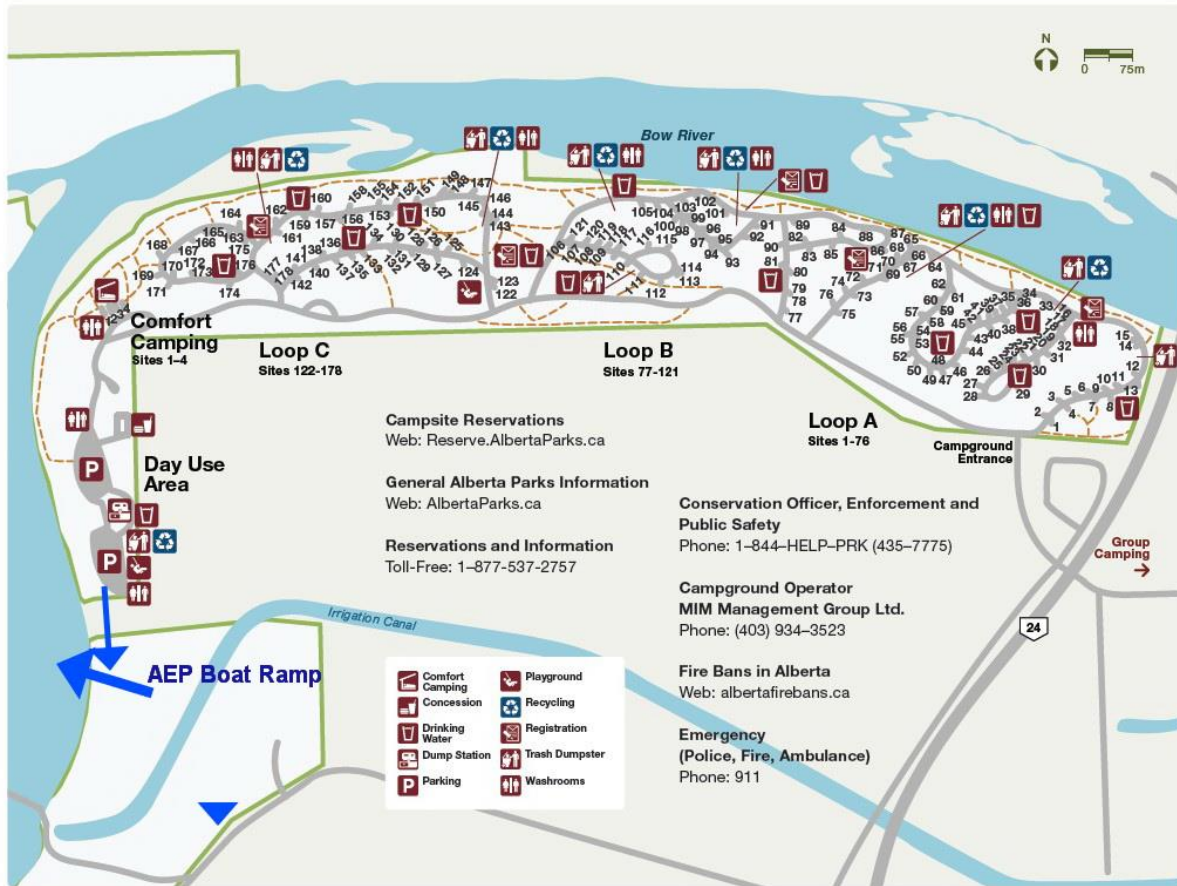
CRUA believes that with minor improvements, the boat ramp and access from the Wyndham-Carseland PP Day Use Area are usable for the public. There will be negligible interference to day-use visitors and campers at the park. Improvements of road access to the boat ramp and possible upgrades to the boat ramp itself may be needed in the future if river access use increases. Currently, we believe the daily traffic volume will not exceed 6 truck/trailers per day.

Considering that casual river access is currently not an option at alternative sites, a designated river access site must be developed below the Carseland Weir for emergency service needs and public use. Certainly, the boat ramp adjacent to the Wyndham-Carseland Provincial Park Day Use Area is a priority development. The development cost is low to open access in 2021.

Calgary River Users Alliance, the Angling Outfitter and Guide Association of Alberta and other member organizations may well be able to financially support development costs. We look forwards to further discussions to expedite approval and development as soon as possible.



Wyndham-Carseland Provincial Park



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Alberta

Wyndham-Carseland Park Map