

Land Lovers Network

Ghost-Kananaskis Sub-Regional Plan

Survey Guide

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Key Links & Information

Links to the Government Survey and documents:

[Ghost-Kananaskis Sub-Regional Plan Survey](#)

[Map of Ghost-Kananaskis](#)

[Summary of proposed plan](#)

Deadline: Complete survey by June 5, 2026

Introduction

Overview

Thank you for taking the time to review our subregional survey response. It's important to complete the government's survey so we can create a clear public record calling for strong ecosystem-based management of the Kananaskis and Ghost headwaters.

At the same time, as you'll see, **the survey is simply too shallow and not detailed enough to create a strong headwaters protection plan.**

The survey asks us to assess broad statements but does not go into any meaningful detail. The vision is framed in appealing terms like "balance," "harmony," and "sustainability," but it does not ask the hard questions that actually matter in land-use planning, like:

- **Priorities:** what should take priority when headwaters protection conflicts with increasing recreation, tourism, or industrial pressure
- **Ecological Limits:** what ecological limits should govern future land use
- **Cumulative Effects:** how cumulative effects should be measured
- **Monitoring:** who should monitor landscape health
- **Enforcement:** how the plan will be enforced when thresholds are crossed
- **Protection:** which high value ecological areas should be protected
- **Restoration Obligations:** what restoration obligations should apply in already damaged areas

In other words, the survey gathers general sentiment, but not the level of detail needed to produce a strong, meaningful and enforceable plan.

Why does this matter? Alberta has a long history of plans that mention cumulative effects, monitoring, and stewardship in principle, but fail to include clear thresholds, simple measurement methods, mandatory responses, and real accountability. When that happens, the language sounds strong, but the protections are weak.

In short, we all need to **complete the survey**, but **we also need to do more**. For everyone who wants to see sound ecosystem-based management of the Ghost and Kananaskis regions, we encourage you to take the following steps:

Step 1: Complete the government survey using our guidelines below.

Step 2: Send a follow-up email with your comments about the survey to ghost-kananaskis-srp@gov.ab.ca. See our example email below.

Step 3: Be prepared to take further action with us this year towards protecting our Eastern Slope headwaters. Look for events and further calls to action!

Background: What a Strong Plan Should Include

The Ghost-Kananaskis area contains essential headwaters, wildlife habitat, cultural landscapes, and some of the most ecologically important public lands in Alberta.

A strong sub-regional plan should:

1. Use Ecosystem-Based Management as the Overall Framework

- clearly prioritize headwaters protection, biodiversity, and ecological integrity
- use ecosystem-based management
- address cumulative effects, not just individual activities
- identify and protect high-value, ecologically-important areas
- reduce and restore linear disturbance

2. Be Enforceable and Transparent

- include independent, transparent monitoring from third parties outside of government and industry
- set clear, measurable, and enforceable ecological thresholds
- require mandatory action when ecological thresholds are exceeded
- be simple enough to understand and enforce, without loopholes

3. Support Sustainable Use & Livelihoods

- allow for sustainable recreation and livelihoods within ecological limits
- support Indigenous stewardship and traditional land relationships in concrete and accountable ways

How to Make Your Responses Impactful: Tips & Guidelines

Use Your Own Voice

We welcome you to follow our guide, but please adapt the message to your own voice. Public input is more credible when people speak in their own voices.

Use Text Boxes

Please use the available text boxes to clearly explain what is missing in the survey.

Call Out Vague Statements

Where statements are vague, misleading, unenforceable, or too weak to support a credible plan, stronger negative responses may be appropriate.

Clarify Strong Statements

Where a statement reflects an important value, such as headwaters protection, you can still note that the wording is incomplete and not meaningful without clear standards, thresholds, monitoring, and enforcement.

The Guide to Recommended Survey Responses

Now let's finally get on with the survey! Please complete the survey using our recommendations below.

1. Draft vision

Survey question: To what degree do you support the vision for the sub-regional plan as written?

Recommended response: I'm somewhat **unsupportive** of the vision statement.

Why?

The current vision sounds positive, but it is too vague and too weak to support as written. It does not clearly prioritize ecological integrity, enforceable limits, Indigenous stewardship, restoration, or cumulative-effects management. If people select a support option, the government may later claim the public broadly supported the vision. Selecting "somewhat unsupportive" more clearly signals that the vision needs substantial strengthening.

Suggested comment

The vision is too vague and does not provide a strong enough foundation for protecting the Ghost-Kananaskis region. It should clearly prioritize headwaters protection, biodiversity, Indigenous stewardship, cumulative-effects limits, restoration, and enforceable ecological thresholds. Recreation, tourism, and logging must be managed within strong ecological limits. They should not come at the expense of conservation and ecological wellbeing. Conservation of these ecosystems must be prioritized.

2. Draft outcomes

For the satisfaction questions, respond to indicate whether each outcome is strong enough as written.

A useful general approach is:

- support outcomes that clearly protect land and water
- be cautious or unsupportive where wording is vague, growth-oriented, or could weaken ecological protection
- use the comments section to ask for stronger wording and enforceable commitments

Recommended response guidance by outcome

A. Recreation and tourism opportunities are sustainable and sufficient to meet the growing demand.

Recommended response: Somewhat dissatisfied

Why: This outcome centres on growth in visitors. It should instead focus on ecological carrying capacity, limits, and the management of cumulative impacts from recreation and tourism.

Possible wording: Recreation and tourism must be managed within ecological limits. The plan should not support growth in tourism and recreation if they increase damage to wildlife habitat, water, cultural values of wilderness, and ecosystem services.

B. Human footprint is effectively managed to conserve biodiversity and water quality.

Recommended response: Moderate satisfaction, but ask for stronger wording

Why: This is important, but too vague. It's not enough to say that the human footprint needs to be managed. The plan must include limits to prevent the human footprint from growing and these limits must be measurable and enforceable. Clear limits need to be placed on forestry, recreation, tourism and other human impacts.

Possible wording: This outcome requires clear thresholds, transparent monitoring, and mandatory action when limits are exceeded. Human footprint should be reduced where it is already too high, not just "managed." The current human footprint is already too high and is degrading this region over time.

C. Our headwaters are protected.

Recommended response: Very satisfied

Why: This should be one of the top priorities, but the plan must define what protection actually means.

Possible wording: The headwaters need to be defined and understood as the whole Ghost-Kananaskis region. Headwaters protection must include enforceable land-use limits, cumulative-effects thresholds, habitat protection, restoration of damaged areas, and stronger

limits on roads and other linear disturbances. Current forestry plans and harvest volumes are degrading the essential water-storage capacity of our headwaters forests.

D. Traditional land uses are supported.

Recommended response: Supportive, with clarification

Why: This is important, especially when it includes Indigenous relationships, stewardship, and cultural continuity. The wording should not be used to justify harmful industrial activity under the banner of “use.”

Possible wording: Traditional land uses should include Indigenous stewardship, cultural continuity, access, and land relationships. This should support the long-term health of the land and water.

E. Policy direction for land uses is streamlined.

Recommended response: Low or mixed satisfaction.

Why: “Streamlined” can mean easier approvals and weaker safeguards. Simplicity is good, but not if it reduces accountability.

Possible wording: Policy should be clear and enforceable, but not simplified at the expense of ecological protection, public oversight, or Indigenous rights and responsibilities. Policy should not be streamlined to allow for more resource extraction or commercial development. They should be clarified to enable greater public understanding and better land-use plan enforcement.

F. The natural resource economy of the area is sustained.

Recommended response: Low satisfaction.

Why: As written, this may reinforce extractive land use without clear ecological limits. The plan should prioritize long-term watershed health and ecosystem-based management, not just sustaining existing patterns of resource use.

Possible wording: The current level of resource extraction is excessive and degrading to the landscape. Biodiversity, native trout, high value ecological areas, old growth, and forest hydrology are declining. We need to reduce the level of natural resource extraction. Specifically,

we need to shift away from clear-cut logging and toward ecosystem-based forest management that includes regenerative and selective logging practices, and the return of prescribed fire. In general, the new plan should encourage a regenerative land-and-water economy that supports restoration, stewardship, and long-term resilience within ecological limits.

G. Wildfire risk is mitigated through preventative actions.

Recommended response: Supportive, with clarification

Why: This matters, but wildfire risk reduction should not be used to justify poorly designed disturbance. The plan should support ecologically sound prevention and restoration.

Possible wording: Current wildfire prevention justifies the use of clear-cut logging, but this kind of forestry has an overall negative effect on water security, soil health, biodiversity and overall ecosystem health. Wildfire prevention should be based on sound ecological planning, restoration, watershed health, and the reduction of harmful landscape fragmentation, not used to justify an outdated and destructive forestry practice. Selective thinning and prescribed burns should be used to reinvigorate ecosystems.

3. Are there any suggestions you have to improve the draft outcome list?

Recommended response: Yes

Suggested response: The outcomes should be strengthened to include enforceable ecological thresholds, cumulative-effects limits, independent monitoring, restoration targets, protection of intact areas, and strong penalties when thresholds are exceeded. The plan should explicitly prioritize headwater protection, biodiversity, and Indigenous stewardship over the growth of recreational, tourism, or industrial pressure.

4. Please pick at least two outcomes that are most important to you.

Recommended top choices

- Our headwaters are protected
- Human footprint is effectively managed to conserve biodiversity and water quality

Other strong choices, depending on the person

- Traditional land uses are supported
- Wildfire risk is mitigated through preventative actions

Suggestion: If these fit your values, choose the outcomes most closely tied to long-term ecosystem health, water security, and enforceable land-use management.

5. Visitation and use map

Suggested guidance

If you use the area, place pins that reflect your relationship to it. Choose activities honestly.

We encourage you to think beyond recreation alone. You can frame their use around:

- connection to nature
- wildlife viewing
- watershed appreciation
- quiet recreation
- cultural relationships to place
- learning, stewardship, and care for the land

If there is a place especially meaningful because of intact habitat, water, or beauty, people can choose that area and later refer to the importance of keeping such areas protected from further fragmentation.

6. Tell us about yourself

Recommended guidance: We encourage you to answer this section honestly. If you are answering these questions on behalf of yourself, you can check the “None/Individual” box.

7. Are you submitting this survey on behalf of an organization, community or interest group?

Recommended guidance: Only say “Yes” if you are officially authorized to represent that organization or group. Otherwise, choose “No.”

8. Conclusion — Do you have anything else to share?

This is an important open comment box.

Recommended response

The Ghost-Kananaskis plan should be ambitious, enforceable, and based on ecological conservation. It needs simple, defensible thresholds to prevent and reduce cumulative effects, habitat fragmentation, and road density. We need key indicators to measure ecological integrity, water volume and water quantity. We need public monitoring that is independent of government and industry, penalties when thresholds are crossed, and mandatory management responses, including limiting new disturbance and prioritizing restoration. This plan should protect high value ecological areas and prioritize headwaters. It should retain and improve ecological integrity.

Alternate version

This plan must move beyond vague intentions. It should prioritize ecological value with clear ecological thresholds, transparent monitoring, enforcement, protection of intact landscapes, reduction of linear disturbance, and restoration of already damaged areas. Headwaters are essential public infrastructure and should be treated that way.

An optional short message that you can adapt

I care about the Ghost-Kananaskis region because it provides clean water, habitat, beauty, and long-term resilience for Alberta. I want a plan that prioritizes headwaters, biodiversity, cumulative-effects management, restoration, and enforceable ecological thresholds. The plan should be simple, strong, and accountable.

**Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.
We look forward to continuing this work with you.**

Recommended Email to Follow Your Survey Input

After completing the survey, please consider sending a follow-up email to the engagement team outlining your concerns in more detail.

Please use your own words where possible. Shared themes are helpful, but personal comments are often more persuasive than identical messages.

Send follow-up email to ghost-kananaskis-srp@gov.ab.ca

CC the shadow minister for Alberta Environment and Protected Areas:
Banff.Kananaskis@assembly.ab.ca

BCC us on the email at landlovers@bowbioregion.ca

Subject: Concerns regarding the Ghost-Kananaskis Sub-regional Plan survey and request for stronger engagement

Hello Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas,

I completed the Ghost-Kananaskis Sub-regional Plan survey and wanted to follow up in writing. In my experience, the survey was too limited to capture the level of detail this planning process requires and the level of public engagement needed.

The survey relies on broad, vague statements and does not meaningfully ask the key questions that should shape a credible sub-regional plan. In particular, I am concerned that it does not adequately address ecological thresholds, cumulative-effects limits, independent monitoring, public reporting, enforcement, restoration obligations, or what should happen when ecological conditions decline beyond acceptable limits.

In my view, the Ghost-Kananaskis plan should:

- involve more meaningful public engagement, including in-person sessions
- clearly prioritize headwaters protection, biodiversity, and ecological integrity
- include simple, ecologically defensible thresholds for key indicators
- require independent monitoring, separate from industry and government, that is reported to the public in accessible ways
- require mandatory management responses when ecological thresholds are crossed
- protect all high-value ecological areas from new fragmentation and disturbance
- commit to restoration and linear feature reduction in already disturbed areas
- support Indigenous stewardship and long-term land relationships in accountable ways

The headwaters of the Elbow, Sheep, Highwood and Bow Rivers are too important for vague commitments and weak accountability. I urge you to strengthen the engagement process and ensure the final plan uses ecosystem-based management with strong commitments to long-term ecological health and integrity.

Thank you for considering this input.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Community / Postal Code, if desired]