

April 21, 2023

Alan Fehr, Superintendent
Jasper National Park
Box 10
Jasper, Alberta T0E 1E0

VIA email: jasper.superintendent@pc.gc.ca

Dear Sir,

We are a group of non-governmental organizations that represent hikers and trail riders from Alberta and British Columbia who recreate in Jasper National Park (JNP). We're concerned about the lack of trail maintenance and failing bridges along the JNP North Boundary Trail (NBT).

The Alberta Equestrian Federation (AEF) represents almost 18,000 horse owners and riders in Alberta, the majority of whom participate in recreational activities with their horses, including trail riding and packing. Alberta Trail Riding Association (ATRA) has over 100 members based in northern Alberta, many of whom ride and pack in the Rocky Mountains including JNP. Back Country Horsemen of British Columbia (BCHBC) has 19 chapters across British Columbia whose members trail ride and pack in B.C. and Alberta, including JNP. Cottonwood Corrals Association (CCA), which is based in Jasper, has members that trail ride and pack regularly in JNP. The Great Divide Trail Association (GDTA) has 500 members and supports thousands of hikers and horseback riders annually who travel the Great Divide Trail which traverses JNP.

The Parks Canada mandate includes protecting and presenting heritage that fosters appreciation and enjoyment for present and future generations. Canada's population is increasing, and greater numbers of Canadians are enjoying hiking and trail riding for their physical and mental health. Those hikers and trail riders are seeking country to explore, including longer trails through more remote areas. The 2022 JNP Management Plan has an objective that 'The park's trail network provides a range of opportunities'. The 2022 JNP Annual Report states that 'removing barriers, fostering participation, and embracing diversity are fundamental to the fulfillment of our mandate'. The NBT is part of Canada's heritage, as are the warden cabins and associated infrastructure along the trail. At almost 200 kilometres, it is the longest continuous trail in the Rocky Mountain Parks, is designed for both hikers and horses, and offers a visitor experience like no other. Prior to its current disrepair, the NBT drew international visitors. Keeping the NBT cleared so that today's hikers and horseback riders—and future generations—can appreciate and enjoy that heritage, fits the JNP mandate.

The Great Divide Trail, which follows JNP's North Boundary Trail from Moose Pass to near Bess Pass, has a national and international following, appealing to hikers who have thru-hiked the US Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail or Continental Divide Trail. The number of hikers completing the entire GDT—1,200 kilometres—has increased from 4 in 2010 to over 100 in 2021. Thousands hike shorter sections of the

trail very year including the visually spectacular section along the NBT. The GDTA expects this demand to increase.

AEF members have regularly observed full hiker and horseback rider trailhead parking lots at many locations along the eastern slopes of Alberta. A new generation of riders is learning to pack horses and are seeking places to go.

But hikers and horseback riders tend not to attempt trails that are in poor condition, hence visitation numbers drop on under-maintained trails. That, in turn, skews visitation numbers downward and suggests lack of interest in those trails. However, hiker numbers and campsite bookings on other JNP backcountry trails tell a different story.

The 2010 JNP management plan funnelled hikers to three backcountry trails: Brazeau, Skyline and Tonquin. The demand for those trails has subsequently skyrocketed. JNP reported that over 90 percent of backcountry campsites along those trails were booked in summer 2021. Hikers attempting to reserve campsites six months in advance struggle to find availability. Over 7,000 hikers visit the Tonquin Valley every year, now. Maintaining other backcountry trails, like the North Boundary Trail, provides alternatives for hikers seeking a backcountry experience.

Due to these reasons and more, we request that the North Boundary Trail is cleared and maintained annually. We also request that the bridges over Carcajou Creek and Gendarme Creek are replaced, or that fords suitable for both hikers and horses, are created by JNP.

It's up to us, the current generation, to make good choices for our future generations. That includes ensuring continued access to Jasper National Park backcountry along trails that First Nations, explorers, guides and recreationalists have travelled for over a century—those who shaped the history of Canada.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to your prompt response.

Kind regards,



Jason Edworthy, President-Elect, Alberta Equestrian Federation, jedworthy@spring-bank.ca

Rita Power, President, Alberta Trail Riders Association

Brian Marriott, President, Back Country Horsemen of British Columbia

Helen Switzer, President, Cottonwood Corrals Association

Doug Borthwick, President, Great Divide Trail Association