



## NEWS RELEASE

# **FINES FOR OFFENCES ON FORESTED PUBLIC LANDS INCREASE ON MAY 1**

April 4, 2007

## **MANAGING GROWTH PRESSURES**

### ***Higher Fines Focus on Stewardship and Responsible Behaviour***

*Edmonton...* It will soon cost more for those who ignore the laws when they set out to enjoy a weekend of recreation in the woods. Effective May 1, fines will increase for offences such as improper waste disposal, careless use of an off-highway vehicle or starting an open fire in or near a Forest Recreation Area.

"Fines are intended to deter people who abuse the environment or ignore safe practices," said Sustainable Resource Development Minister Ted Morton. "Higher fines will help drive home the message that stewardship and responsible behaviour are expected from recreationists on our forested public lands."

The fine for starting and maintaining an open fire within one km of a Forest Recreation Area has increased from \$50 to \$500; removing firewood from a Forest Recreation Area will increase from \$75 to \$250; and operating on- or off-highway vehicles or snow vehicles outside of designated areas will increase from \$75 to \$250.

The fines are enforceable in Forest Recreation Areas, on Forest Recreation Trails and in Forest Land Use Zones such as in the Ghost and Bighorn areas near Calgary and Rocky Mountain House.

The Alberta government has begun an information and awareness campaign that will include public service announcements, fact sheets and other information handed out to visitors and placed at designated entrance points to forest areas.

Implementing an aggressive strategy to protect the health of Alberta's forests is an important action under Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to manage Alberta's growth pressures and improve Albertans' quality of life. Other priorities for the government are to govern with integrity and transparency, build a stronger Alberta and provide safe and secure communities.

**Attachment: A map of the affected areas and list of the increased fines can be found at [www.srd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca) by clicking on Lands.**

## **Backgrounder**

### ***Updated Fines for Recreation-Related Offences under Forest Recreation and Castle Management Area Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ) Regulations***

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) strives to foster and support responsible recreation on public land to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities, environmental sustainability, and cooperation between users. In order to advance these goals, fines have been increased for **existing** offences within Forest Land Use Zones, Forest Recreation Areas and on Forest Recreation Trails.

#### **What is the purpose of the fines?**

The fines are intended to deter irresponsible recreational use and improve compliance with current recreation legislation. Increases in fines support broader recreation program objectives to ensure conscientious use of public lands, and an environmentally sustainable public land base for future generations. They will assist in reducing adverse impacts on recreational infrastructure, soil, vegetation, watercourses and habitat.

#### **When do the fine increases take effect?**

Increased fines take effect May 1, 2007.

#### **Who can enforce these offences?**

SRD's forest officers have the primary enforcement role. Additionally, SRD's fish and wildlife officers; Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture's conservation officers and the RCMP provide enforcement assistance as required at local levels.

#### **Why have fines been set at the current levels?**

Fines have been increased to become consistent with levels set in other provincial statutes such as the *Provincial Parks Act*. Fines are set at levels that will deter non-compliance and are proportionate to the type of offence, such as the potential for environmental damage.

#### **What areas are affected by the fine increase?**

Fine increases will apply only to recreation areas legislated under the *Alberta Forests Act*: Forest Recreation Regulation and the Castle Special Management Area Forest Land Use Zone Regulation. Most of these lands are found along Alberta's Eastern Slopes and includes Forest Land Use Zones such as the Ghost and the Bighorn Backcountry (see the attached map). Also included are Forest Recreation Areas and Forest Recreation Trails located across Alberta.

#### **What areas are not affected by the fine increase?**

Recreational access on vacant public lands outside of these areas, public lands under agricultural disposition, as well as provincial parks and protected areas are subject to different laws and are not affected by the increase in these fines.

#### **How can I learn more?**

Further information can be obtained from your local Sustainable Resource Development office, by contacting Service Alberta at 310-0000, or by visiting [www.srd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca).