



St. Paul/Elk Point Economic Development Alliance

Winter Destination Site Concept Plan and Implementation Strategy

Westcove Municipal Recreation Area

May 2025

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1 Introduction

The Westcove Municipal Recreation Area (Westcove) has been identified as a tourism destination opportunity site in the County of St. Paul. This opportunity has been identified as a year-round destination and winter staging area for local visitors and tourists to meet the increasing demand for diverse and interesting four-season camping and winter experiences.

The Westcove site has been identified by the St. Paul/Elk Point Economic Development Alliance (STEP) through the Regional Tourism Opportunity Identification and Destination Development report. STEP represents several communities working together to plan and advocate for projects and initiatives.

The Town of St. Paul, County of St. Paul, Town of Elk Point, and Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay believe Westcove to be a preferred location for winter development. Travel Alberta completed a Discovery Report for the Northeast Lakelands Tourism Development Zone (TDZ) and concluded there is a current need for long-term infrastructure to support tourism and local recreational opportunities year-round. The development of a winter staging area at Westcove supports Travel Alberta's priorities in the Northeast Lakelands TDZ.



▲ **Figure 1: Westcove Welcome Sign**
Source: County of St. Paul

1.1 Project Purpose

The primary project deliverable is a Concept Plan and Implementation Strategy that will provide direction to STEP for the development of a winter park and destination area. The proposed winter park is to provide for and support new winter recreational uses and activities. It is acknowledged that the design and planning of the park is to enable the opportunity to expand recreation and tourism opportunities into the shoulder seasons, providing for year-round tourism recreational use.

1.2 Site Location and Access

The Westcove Winter Park is located approximately 15 km north of the Town of St. Paul in the County of St. Paul on the west shore of Vincent Lake (**Figure 2**) in Northeast Alberta. The Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay is further north along the western shore, approximately a 9 km drive given the road configuration. The Westcove site is about a 2-hour drive north of the City of Edmonton. Westcove is situated between and in proximity to both the northeast and southeast branches of the Iron Horse Trail, a regional trail network. The Vincent Lake area has numerous pockets of residential development, including lakefront properties and rural subdivisions with large country residential parcels.

Westcove is accessed from a network of well-maintained County roads, with highway access from Highway 881 to the east and Highway 28 to the north. Range Road 100A via Range Road 100 from Township Road 592 provides direct access to Westcove. Directional signage for Westcove is provided on the County’s roadway network.

The perimeter of Vincent Lake has numerous acreages with permanent and seasonal residences. Mallaig Provincial Recreational Area is in the Horseshoe Bay area on the north shore of Vincent Lake.

The area’s scenic attributes include a peaceful setting with rolling topography with forested hills and farmland. These geographical features are evident in **Figure 1**.



▲ **Figure 2: Westcove Municipal Recreation Area Location Context**



Figure 3: Westcove Boat Launch Looking North ►
Source: County of St. Paul

1.3 Site Setting, Use and Amenities

Westcove is a well-developed summer-use campground site that sits within a forested area with immediate access to Vincent Lake. The site is presently developed with 66 campsites with power services (Figure 4).

Amenities include Wi-Fi, shower facilities/flush toilets, firepits, sanitary station, day use, and group use area, pickleball/tennis courts, basketball hoops, ball diamond, horseshoe pits, playground, and a

water spray park. The site’s lake amenities include a boat launch, sandy beach, and an old wooden beach tower that overlooks the beach and lake. There is a strong network of hiking trails within the forested areas of the site. While the campground facilities are closed for the winter, the south portion of the site is used as a staging area for Nordic cross-country skiing.

▼ Figure 4: Westcove Municipal Park Campground Map



▲ Figure 5: Westcove Hiking Trails
Source: County of St. Paul



▲ Figure 6: Westcove Beach Tower
Source: County of St. Paul

2 Plan and Policy Context

2.1 Tourism Plans and Strategies

2.1.1 Northeast Lakelands Tourism Development Zone | Discovery Report

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 60% of visitation and 75% of tourism expenditures occurred in the mature tourism destinations of Banff, Lake Louise, Canmore, Jasper, Calgary, and Edmonton. To expand upon and support tourism opportunities across the province, Travel Alberta (TA) has identified ten Tourism Development Zones (TDZs). In partnership with communities and stakeholders, TA has developed Discovery Reports for each TDZ. These Discovery Reports are intended to inform and guide future destination development plans that include medium- and long-term strategies to contribute to the growth of Alberta’s tourism economy.

Westcove Municipal Park is located within the Northeast Lakelands TDZ (**Figure 7**). This TDZ includes the area east of Edmonton, reaching east to Lloydminster, north to Lac La Biche and Cold Lake, and west to Highway 827.

The Northeast Lakelands TDZ is currently best known for encompassing most of Alberta’s lake country; agritourism; arts, culture and history; Elk Island National Park; and soft adventures, such as downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, riding OHVs, sailing, cycling, and mountain biking. Lake experiences and activities such as fishing, boating and water sports dominate the summer season.

2.1.2 STEP Regional Tourism Opportunity Identification and Development Strategy

The STEP Regional Tourism Opportunity Identification and Development Strategy (September 2023) report prepared by Outlook Market Research & Consulting Ltd outlines the stages required to identify, strategize, prioritize, and implement the tourism opportunities in the St. Paul and Elk Point region.

The development strategy outlines Vision and Mission statements centered on increasing tourism to the area and encouraging the expansion of the visitor economy. These ideas are supported through the strategic plan results which identified five goals for the St. Paul, Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay, Elk Point Region:

- Product and Destination Development
- Enhance Marketing
- Education and Training
- Strategic Positioning, Partnerships and Packages
- Tourism Infrastructure Development



▲ **Figure 7: Northeast Alberta Tourism Development Zone** (Source: Travel Alberta)

Each of these goals has numerous objectives, all building to the fulfillment of the goal. The winter destination strategy for Westcove is in alignment with the above goals. The STEP Strategy includes direction for the development of specific facilities to support a winter destination staging area including a heated service building to provide a space for warm-up, gathering, and washroom and shower services, to support overnight bunkie style accommodation.

2.2 Planning and Land Use

The Westcove site is located within the County of St. Paul and subject to the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and corresponding Land Use Bylaw. The site is subject to County requirements for building and development permits. No other municipal level planning documents affect the site.

2.2.1 County of St. Paul Municipal Development Plan

The County of St. Paul Municipal Development Plan (MDP) has identified the Westcove Recreational Area as being within the *Agricultural Use Areas*. The Agricultural area designation ensures the minimization of conflicts between agricultural land and non-agricultural land users. Within the County, recreational uses such as campgrounds, day use areas, picnic sites, hiking and ski trails, and other similar uses as developed by either private or public interests may be allowed in all areas, if they do not interfere with agricultural operations.

2.2.2 County of St. Paul Land Use Bylaw

Under the County of St. Paul Land Use Bylaw (Bylaw 2021-13) (LUB), the staging area lands are districted as *Agriculture*. Like the MDP, the LUB protects agricultural land to encourage the development of those agricultural activities associated with farming. However, the development of non-agricultural uses is applicable in locations where the land can support the intended use, without negatively affecting agriculture operations.

Any developments within the Westcove Recreational Area will be subject to the provisions of the land use bylaw requirements, such as permitted and discretionary uses in the agriculture zone. The proposed structures in the concept plan qualify as either a permitted or discretionary use but may be subject to development permits.

3 Stakeholder Engagement

In the initial stages of the project, individual conversations were held with varying stakeholders ranging from Elected Officials, local recreational clubs, and organizations through April and May 2024. Through these collaborative conversations, stakeholders were asked to share what types of uses and/or facilities would be necessary to support local clubs, tourists, and to establish a winter destination where people can visit for the day to engage in winter activities or stay overnight to experience winter camping and activities.

The following provides a summary of the comments made during the stakeholder engagement conversations and is grouped into the categories of project area observations, activities and programming, structures and facilities, operations and management, and other considerations. The summary below attempts to maintain the opinions of the user groups and stakeholders involved in the engagement. This report attempts to portray the engagement conversations as intended by the engaged, therefore the comments below are verbatim.

3.1 Project Area Observations

The comments below provide an overview of visitors' experiences with the Westcove area or other key information that would inform the concept plan and site analysis. These experiences will vary based on the users and what the users wish to see for Westcove. Some general observations included:

- The campground is generally underutilized due to the water level and quality conditions (i.e., drop in water levels and presence of blue-green algae) of Vincent Lake. This has impacted summer water activities, primarily

swimming, boating and fishing. Concerns with: Blue-green algae blooms and; surrounding wastewater disposal into the lake, and drainage from surrounding agricultural lands

- The south lands are farmed during the summer months with a lease agreement between the County and a local farmer that has a 3-year term. The lease does not allow for permanent structures or facilities to be constructed where cultivation is occurring. Temporary structures and winter activities may be accommodated provided that there is no negative impact to agricultural production of these lands
- Westcove is located centrally within the County and is a regional asset, which serves and benefits residents in the County
- There are many well-developed trails for cross-country skiing and hiking
- The campground is located on varying and interesting topography, with several slopes and abundant natural tree cover
- Re-highlighting and activating this area year-round would bring people back and revitalize the Vincent Lake area
- How to phase it so that you build it up and out to the overall vision? Experience is huge!

3.2 Activities & Programming

There was generally a common interest and support for well-known and established winter activities within the region, including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, and ice fishing. A few stakeholders stated that residents living within the County are willing to drive up to 1.5–2 hours to participate in unique winter activities.

Additional activities that were suggested during stakeholder conversations included:

- Snow tubing/chutes
- Fire pits with seating
- Outdoor curling surface for a game known as Crokicurl
- Archery, there are some local schools that have archery clubs
- Biathlon – Cross-country skiing combined with target shooting
- Additional non-motorized trails for other users and activities such as hiking and fat tire biking. Need to ensure that there are no conflicts between hikers and cross-country skiing tracks
- Historical and educational elements. Local schools are incorporating more outdoor and land-based and cultural learning: Wood burning stove could be incorporated within facility to teach about history of the area and connect with home economics
- Educational signage highlighting local vegetation and animals (Boreal Forest ecosystem), and Indigenous history and culture. Signage suggested to be provided in English, French, and Cree

Skating

Skating is a very popular winter activity in the area. It was noted that skating activities may present some challenges including the amount of maintenance required. Suggestions included:

- Looped ice-skating trail through the trees
- Skating rink with lighting
- Skating ribbon around the lake

Festivals and Events

There are a number of events and festivals in the STEP region take place during both the summer and winter months. These events or similar ones have the potential to be located at Westcove:

- Shiver Fest on the Family Day long weekend
- Winter festival (light displays, sleigh rides, hot chocolate around the fire pit, etc.)
- Summer festival, could be music-based or sports-based
- Christmas or summer markets
- ACFA – Cabane a sucre – Sugar Shack Festival
- Sports Competitions such as a cross-country ski loppet or archery competition (other communities such as Smoky Lake and Lac La Biche host competitions)
- Movie Nights – Potential venue for a movie night with proper equipment

Snowmobiling

There were mixed views on snowmobiling and ATV use:

- Snowmobiling would be difficult as there are no snowmobile trails. The site is located too far away for snowmobilers travelling on the Iron Horse Trail to get to the site on County roads
- Could be an opportunity for snowmobilers to get to the site from Town and have a hot dog roast warm-up activity and then loop back to Town
- Looped routes are important for snowmobilers and ATV users. These routes would need to be developed to make this attractive to this user group
- The Snowmobile Club saw Westcove as an opportunity for local snowmobilers. It would be a benefit to have areas to warm up, cook, and use a washroom. Local snowmobilers travel up to 50, 100+ km. The club uses Vincent Lake, and local County roads that are well maintained. Overall, access to Westcove is not an issue. They noted that non-locals do not know where to go as there is no established trail system, and features would need to be located appropriately to ensure that there are no snowmobile

conflicts with cross-country ski trails at Westcove

Tubing Hill

- Tubing/tobogganing and ice/snow chutes would be attractive to local and regional visitors
- This activity would need a pulley system to bring people up the hill. It would be very attractive to visitors with multiple visitations
- Tube Park/chute could have lazy carpet to get up the hill, and tube down the hill. It could be located closer to the lake

Signage

Signage was identified as an opportunity for communication of local cultural and natural history:

- Large and readable trail signage for winter and summer trails
- Signage and trail names for the cross-country ski trails. Important for wayfinding and if someone needs help they can call and let people know which trail they are on and near trail marker 'x'
- Education signage on flora, fauna, indigenous history and culture. There is a historical society in St. Paul that could highlight local Cree or French elders and history
- Having signage in English, French, and Cree
- Boreal Forest area – Flora and fauna study group to learn about the trees and ecosystems, including wetlands
- Outdoor and land-based learning is popular
- Winter lighting is important for safety and visibility
- Programming Partnerships and opportunities include Native Friendship Centre – e.g. Saturday event with Indigenous teachings; and St. Paul District Arts Foundation

3.3 Structures and Facilities

There was widespread support for buildings, structures and facilities that support winter activities and programming:

- A place with facilities that can support experiences - a facility would be a venue that could attract events such as a winter triathlon or winter survivalist workshops
- A venue with flexibility to accommodate a variety of users
- Buildings/spaces for warming and washroom facilities
- Local Councilor suggested that the County was interested in incorporating geodomes in the summer, but there could be a possibility in the winter as well depending on camp operations throughout the winter season
- Staff are only present during the summer camping season – heating in the winter needs consideration
- A building with a kitchen would be beneficial to attract users/visitors
- A cook-out structure that could be rented to groups
- Wood-burning fire – could be an educational piece
- Need a facility that can support group bookings - could support family functions/reunions, school groups, hobby groups, retreats, etc.
- Lodge-like building with kitchen, room accommodations, large rooms for groups
- Place to warm up for day-users
- Fireplace
- One building that supports multiple functions and groups
- Rustic and old theme – could incorporate historical aspects like a wood burning stove, which could support future programming

- Lodge building with a generic washroom with showers, a big area to sit and visit and collaborate, with break-out individual rooms – could accommodate a range of people and should be flexible with a 25-bed capacity
- The facility could also support lone travelers that want to get away and have an isolated experience
- Other overnight accommodation (Geodomes, cabins, yurts etc.) gives a more interesting experience than a hotel - could attract events such as Tradeshows for sportsmen
- Concerns were raised that a large rental building is:
 - Expensive to construct, service and maintain
 - May compete with other community halls in the County, especially those that could use rentals from groups
 - Alternative that was suggested was to just provide a kitchen structure that can be rented out
 - T-Dock is used for fishing and viewing wildlife - watchable wildlife. There are some rare bird species in the area
 - Nordic Spa with outdoor hot tub, spa hut or barrel sauna
 - Concessions may be difficult as Food trucks in town have not been successful.
 - Gates requires code - gates help prevent possible vandalism
 - Need to pay to get in and then you have access to activities - Ski Club could have their own codes

3.4 Operations, Management, and Maintenance

There were numerous ideas and comments regarding operations and maintenance:

- There is no camp or County staffing during the winter - only the Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Club uses the site in the winter
- The County would need to approve a budget for additional staffing during the winter - would need to be feasible
- Recreation facilities need to be on a user-pay system
- If there is an economic impact and it is sustainable, then there is justification for the County to use tax dollars
- Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) where everyone picks up some of the cost - people from the County and the Town
- Management and caretaking could potentially require 3-5 staff, depending on the days and hours of operation
- Collaboration with local municipalities on how to run the site

3.5 Other

Other related comments are as follows:

- The need to show how this can be profitable to the County - County views parks with the lens of maintenance and costs and it is for the ratepayers - show that it isn't a free service but there are fees which lead to profits
- Overall security concerns as there have been an increase in vandalism and break-ins in the County - due to the isolated and unoccupied nature of the site, some are concerned that there will be break-ins and damage to new structures

- It could be a winter festival place with the lake, trees, skiing and snowshoeing
- The population within the area that would utilize it and people that live around a lake should take the time to enjoy the area
- Residents in the Town will drive an hour to Cold Lake to go tubing
- There is so much good in the area that people fly to other destinations but never take the opportunity to enjoy what is around them
- The whole perception of the lake and the area would improve if the lake itself could improve
- Beyond group gatherings, a Councilor felt that there is more of an opportunity to host families that come for a day, night, week, or weekend
- If attractive enough, visitors are willing to drive for up to 2 hours – people drive to Bonnyville for activities
- Numerous stakeholders pointed out that the Westcove site could be of regional tourism importance. Given appropriate amenities, the Westcove site would eliminate the need for local user groups to travel outside the area for unique leisure opportunities
- The cross-country ski opportunity is well supported and strong due to the presence of the Lakeland Cross-Country ski club, which is well organized, but it is noted that the growth opportunity around this activity is limited by the lack of additional volunteers
- This site was well supported as a possible venue for numerous winter events and festivals. Festivals could successfully be supported on this site, but the event theming and ideas would need to be developed and marketed
- There is an opportunity for creative and collaborative funding for the development and operation of the site to ensure long-term success.

3.6 Stakeholder Comments Analysis

This section identifies the major concerns and underlying themes that have been brought forward through the stakeholder engagement process. Generally, the comments focused on comparisons to other destinations or around what specific activities and facilities could be envisioned for the site. The funding and operational requirements for this site were a concern since that information around these aspects was not shared.

The general themes were as follows:

- There was high support for winter activities and accommodations. Feedback identified that there was an opportunity for use by various diverse groups in the community and the region. As these opportunities presently do not exist, there will be a need to promote and market the Westcove site

3.7 Potential User Groups

Numerous potential user groups were identified. These user groups are either locally or regionally based, with the key user group being the Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Club.

3.7.1 School Groups

The Westcove site is presently being used by school groups for various recreation activities. The following comments were noted:

- Trails should be groomed/cleared, need washrooms, and a place to escape the elements
- Overnight trips can be difficult due to insurance concerns
- Have used splash park in warmer months
- Group sizes are highly variable
- For cross-country running, there could be 50-100 participants

3.7.2 Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Club

The Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Club (“Club”) has been identified as the current major user, and most active group for this site. The Club is a volunteer-run organization that provides and maintains cross-country ski tracks at the Westcove site through a lease agreement. The Club has been at Westcove site for 3 years and works with the County and surrounding landowners to develop the trail network. Trails have been established throughout Westcove, on County lands located to the south, and around the water body southwest of the campground (**Figure 11**). The Club feels that they are at capacity in terms of the number of trails provided.

There is a significant demand in the area for cross-country skiing. The Club receives numerous calls from individuals and groups, including schools, youth groups, and others that want to try cross-country skiing. The club has an online registration form.



▲ **Figure 9: Site Signage**
Source: Lakeland Cross Country Ski Club



▲ **Figure 8: Groomed Ski Trail at Westcove**
Source: Lakeland Cross Country Ski Club

Club Management and Operations: The Club is run and operated solely by volunteers, and they are responsible for purchasing and storing ski and track setting equipment, collecting membership and day-pass fees, teaching new users, and are responsible for track setting. After each significant snowfall, the tracks must be set during the coldest period, which is optimal for track setting. Track setting at Westcove takes approximately three (3) hours to complete. The Club utilizes a snowmobile with track setter. For security, the snowmobile is stored at an off-site private location. Smaller equipment is stored in a secure location at the campground. The Club has an agreement with the local golf course for ski and boot storage.

Membership and Fees: The Club is membership based and charges a seasonal fee of \$52 for adults. People who are not members and use the ski tracks are charged a day-pass rate of \$10 for adults and \$5 for youth. The fees are used for operations and equipment, and membership fees to other organizations such as Nordic Alberta and Nordic Canada. The remainder of the fees are used for maintaining and purchasing equipment such as skis, boots, and track setting implements, and for the club’s insurance. In the past, the Club has organized

different fundraising events to raise additional funds. Day-passes are purchased online, and the payment of fees is an honor-system. Over a season, the Club collects between \$50 - \$100 in day-pass fees, which is well below the estimated total fee amount that the Club should be collecting.

The Club faces several constraints and limitations due to the volunteer nature of the organization including volunteer burnout and fatigue, limited funding sources, purchasing and maintaining their own equipment, not enough equipment and

volunteers to meet the demand and the commitment needed to develop and set tracks.

Existing Amenities at Westcove: During the winter season, the County brings in portable toilets, picnic tables, and firewood to Westcove to support the Club. These amenities are in the parking area adjacent to the boat launch, south of the campground. The Club only uses the campground for trails.



◀ Figure 10: Westcove Nordic Ski Map

3.7.3 Other Groups

Other potential user groups and activities have been identified as follows:

- 4H Club Groups for recreation activities and events
- Boy Scout and Girl Guide groups
- Moms and Tots groups
- Fishing groups/organizations - there is an opportunity to host women's fishing retreats – up to 100 participants
- Retreats for various organizations – do not need to be held in the Rocky Mountains!
- Alberta Snowmobile Association
- Private users – families, reunions, private cross-country ski and snowshoeing clubs, etc.

3.8 Precedents Discussed

Several other precedent facilities/venues were identified and discussed.

- On the east side of the lake by the Town of St. Vincent – campground with large, screened gazebo with a large firepit in the middle. Lots of reunions have been hosted there
- Kimball Lake – has a boardwalk through the forest, with posts and signage, with a “Here is an Aspen Tree” with an article and facts – becomes an educational tool. Have different loops that loop back to a starting point - you need to have a map with the loops identified. Used by hikers, kids, and bikers
- Barn loft in Vegreville – local quilting group goes there
- Smoky Lake Campground – has identified a northern lights theme/focus
- People look for event spaces that are slightly larger to accommodate large groups and events – Métis Crossing is an example or model

4 Precedent Overview

Precedents from other areas that offer winter camping and activities were examined to determine where similar opportunities can be incorporated into the plan for the Westcove Winter Destination Area.

Areas around Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario were primarily focused on to ensure that selected precedents have a comparable winter climate as well as geographic and environmental conditions. For inspiration to expand beyond a baseline approach, other areas and sites are included below.

Together these different sets of precedents inform the design and programming of the concept plan for Westcove, including logistical and servicing elements.

In the following subsections, an overview of the precedents has been provided and organized by Province. A detailed overview of the provincial precedents has been included in **Appendix B**.

4.1 Alberta Parks

Alberta Parks is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Provincial Parks and Recreation Areas across Alberta. Two of these parks were reviewed; Sir Winston Churchill Park near Lac La Biche, and Cooking Lake – Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area, east of Edmonton.

4.1.1 Sir Winston Churchill Park

This Provincial Park is unique in that the park consists of eight (8) islands of Lac La Biche. The park is only operational from May to October and incorporates both day-use areas and overnight accommodation. A few cabins remain open through the winter for Winter Comfort Camping. Trails designed for hiking connect the various attractions, viewpoints, facilities, and accommodations.

4.1.2 Cooking Lake - Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

The Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area is 97 square kilometers, located east of Edmonton.

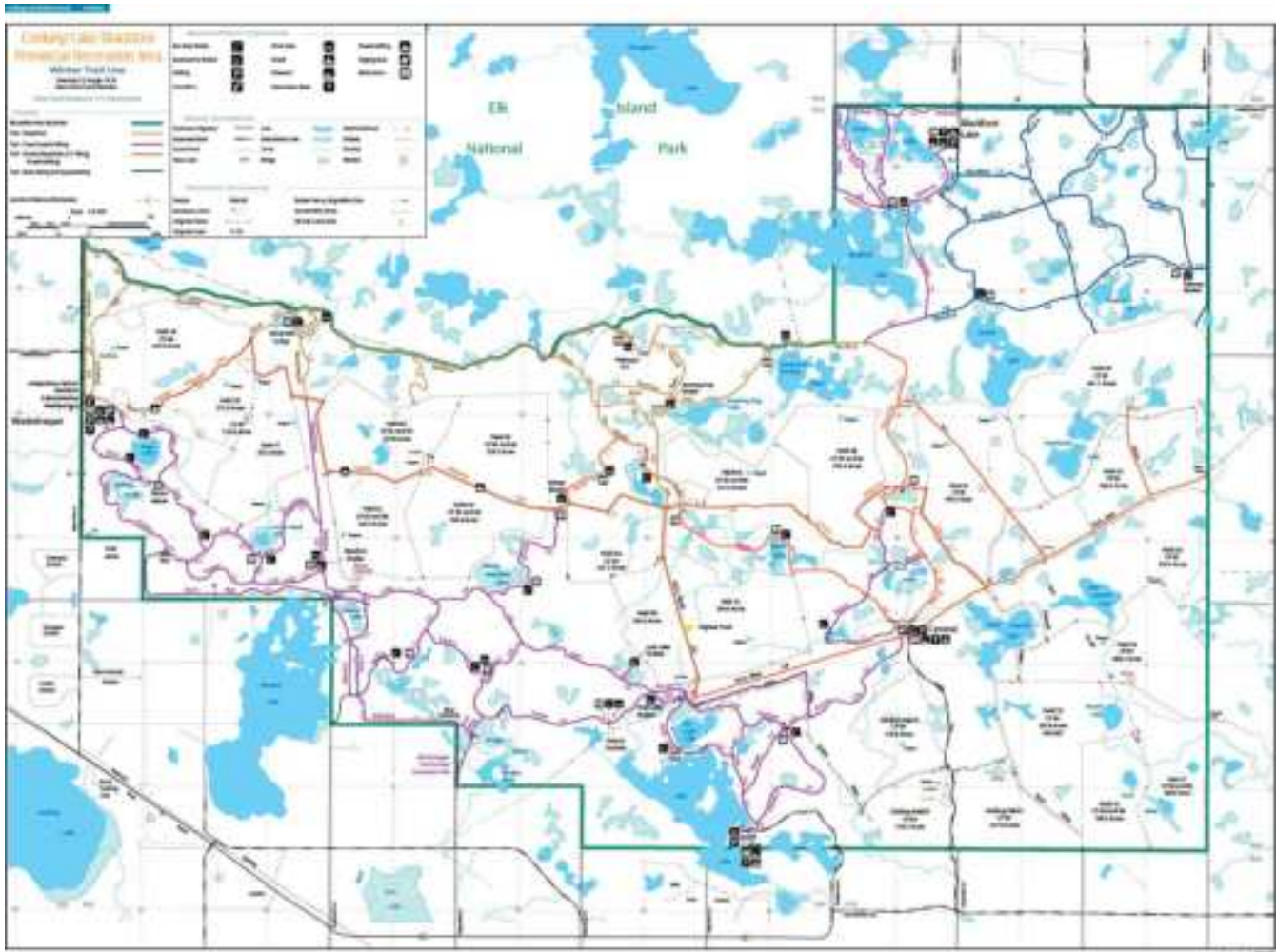
This site has various amenities available throughout the winter season. The area contains forests, pastures and wetlands, and is a multiple use area that supports a variety of activities, including agriculture, wildlife management, and outdoor recreation.

This area is a popular destination for winter outdoor enthusiasts and hosts cross-county ski events such as the Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival. There is no formal programming at this site.

This location has a 170 km trail network, which accommodates cross-country skiing, equestrian, dog sledding, ice skating, fat biking, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling. The Park has one of the largest cross-country trail networks in Alberta. There are multiple staging areas throughout, with facilities and picnic areas, which can be seen in **Figure 12**. There are no overnight accommodations within this recreation area at this time, however, there may be significant future pent-up demand and opportunity for the development of overnight accommodations due to this site's robust winter recreation outdoor opportunities and proximity to Edmonton.



◀ **Figure 11: Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park Map**



▲ Figure 12: Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area

4.2 Saskatchewan Parks

Provincial parks operated by Sask Parks in Saskatchewan that offer winter use provide opportunities for both guided and self-guided activities, and accommodations for those that are new to winter camping or prefer additional amenities, as well as options for those that are more experienced or prefer less amenities.

Three parks in Saskatchewan offer winter camping, which include Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Echo Valley, and Buffalo Pound Provincial Parks. Each park offers visitors the opportunity to stay in either a Camp-Easy yurt or tent. The winter camping season runs from November 1 to March 15.

www.arcadis.com

Westcove Report

▼ Figure 13: Canadian Birkebeiner Festival

Source: Canadian Birkie Festival



The Camp-Easy yurt or tent provides bunk-style cots, electric heater, queen bed, camp chairs, propane camp stove for cooking and an axe, and are offered at \$85/night. These parks also offer winter campsites, which are offered at \$29/night (powered) and \$16/night (no-power).

The Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park has a resort building offering hotel room accommodations and provides additional amenities for visitors that stay in a yurt or tent, or at campsite. These amenities include access to indoor showers/washrooms, hot tub and sauna, and restaurant.

As these sites are in provincial parks, a valid entry permit is required. There are three permit options, which are a day, week, or annual pass. The cost of passes (2024) is \$11, \$42, and \$82, respectively. The nightly rental rate for yurts is \$85 – \$116, depending on the level of amenities provided. Basic amenities include bunk beds or futons, heater, power, camp stove, picnic tables and firepits. The sites offer a winter camping experience with limited washroom amenities.

Sask Parks provides winter activities and programming at these parks, as well as at Candle Lake, Duck Mountain, Moose Mountain, Pike Lake and Great Blue Heron Provincial Parks. Sask Parks provides park programming and events at these parks to provide opportunities for people to enjoy and learn different recreational activities, experience nature, and participate in educational tours on local history or natural features.

- Sask Parks offers a developed palette of attractive winter programming. All parks provide self-guided opportunities for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and park activity kits, while most parks also provide ice fishing, hiking, and crokicurl. Other popular activities include disc golf, fat-tire biking, snowmobiling, tobogganing, and skating. Guided and programmed events run by Sask Parks include the following events that run weekly such as guided/themed

snowshoe tours and guided Nordic skiing “learn to ski”.

- Other activities include Learn to Play Crokicurl; Bonfire Skating Party; Winter Fun Basecamp.

▼ **Figure 14: Mongolian Yurt** (Source: SaskParks)



▲ **Figure 15: Camp-Easy Yurt** (Source: SaskParks)

4.3 Ontario Parks

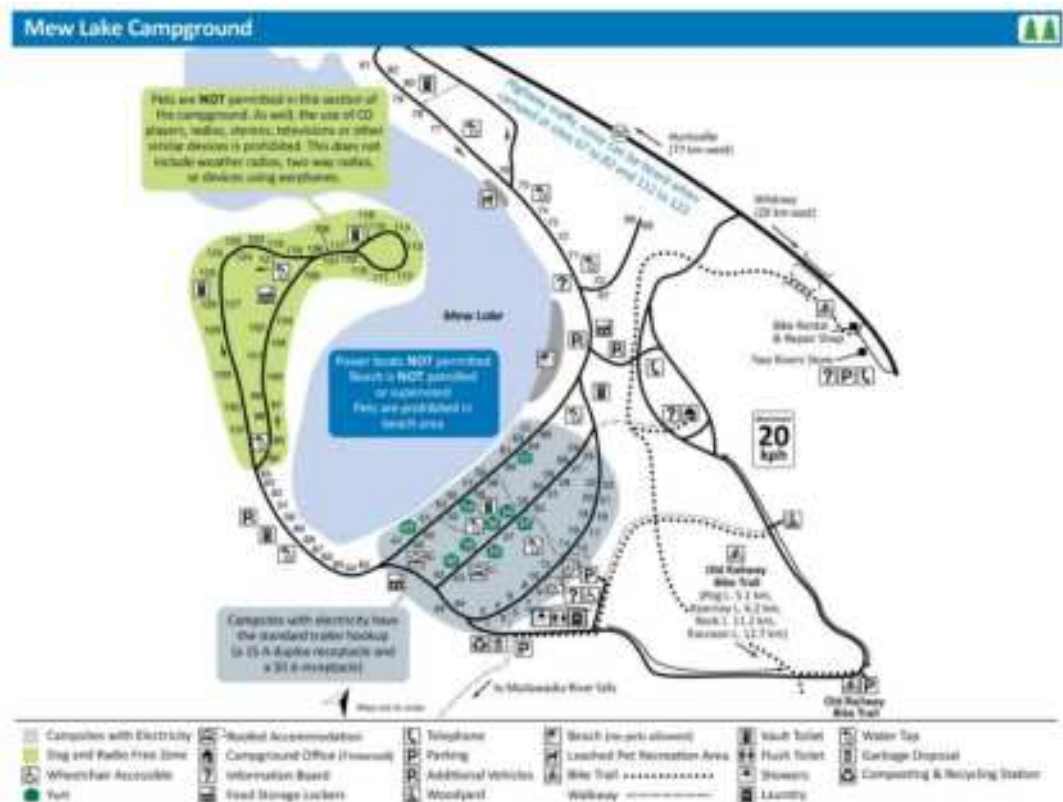
One location within the Province of Ontario was reviewed as part of precedent research. Algonquin Provincial Park’s Mew Lake Campground is comparable to Vincent Lake, a small lake with a campground. The site offers a range of winter recreation activities with limited programming. Mew Lake is the only full-service year-round campground at Algonquin Park.

Mew Lake offers both yurts and cabins as year-round accommodation. Six (6) yurts are available with basic indoor amenities such as bunk beds, dining table/chairs, propane heat, and power outlet. Outdoor amenities include an outdoor cooking area, picnic table and firepit. For yurt users, a heated comfort station provides washroom and showers. Park day use permits are \$21/day with the yurt rentals at \$155/night. The Mew Lake Campground Map is shown in **Figure 17**.



▲ **Figure 16: Yurt at Algonquin Park** (Source: Ontario Parks)

▼ **Figure 17: Mew Lake Campground Map**



4.4 Northern Alberta - Private Accommodations

Privately owned and operated winter accommodation precedents were reviewed for the central and northern parts of the province, as precedents located near or around mountain parks and southern Alberta are not comparable in terms of attributes, experience and location.

There was a limited selection of winter accommodation opportunities with all sites offering heated, powered geodomes, with some also offering cabins or tiny homes. All the precedents provided a comfortable luxury winter accommodation experience with attractive amenities such as wood fired Nordic spas, hot tubs, and saunas. All the sites present all-season experiences with winter accommodations being a distinct offering. The nightly rates are typically in the order of \$300-\$500+.

Winter activities mostly include snowshoeing, hiking, stargazing and nature exploration with the emphasis being placed on enjoying and experiencing interesting wood-fired heated amenities within a scenic setting. Service amenities are typically off the grid with well-appointed flush/compost toilets and hot showers, which are an important part of a unique luxury winter accommodation experience.

Cooking and food preparation typically were enabled by firepits, stoves and BBQs and for geodomes, located outdoors or in an outdoor cookhouse.



▲ **Figure 18: Geodome**
Source: *GlampGood*



▲ **Figure 19: Geodome**
Source: *Refuge Bay Campground*



▼ **Figure 20: Sauna Amenity**
Source: *350Farms*

One operator offers an all-inclusive experience with gourmet meals delivered to the geodome accommodation. No precedents offered a rustic camping experience that requires any winter camping skills. A summary of these precedents is presented in **Table 1**.

4.5 North American Precedents – Private Accommodations

The desire for a comfortable and interesting northern climate winter camping experience has resulted in significant growth in the winter camping industry in North America. In Canada, there are numerous examples of privately owned and operated winter accommodations.

While the precedents located in Provincial Parks tend to focus on a winter camping experience in yurts with basic amenities, the privately owned and operated precedents are primarily focused on a more luxury, glamping type of experience offering unique and well-equipped geodomes, yurts and amenity buildings. Some operators offered a resort-like setting and amenities. Winter activities offered include snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, hiking, ice skating, and nature exploration. All precedents drew attention to an immersive nature experience with distinctive accommodations and services. The nightly rates varied from \$300-\$600+.

4.6 Precedent Accommodations Summary

Below is an overall summary of the accommodations from all precedents examined. As seen in the table on the following page, this summary provides insight into the similarities and differences among the precedents. This comparison provides insights into the existing state of the winter camping and recreation offerings at various locations.

For overnight accommodation, there are a few different options for winter camping. These included yurts, huts, cabins, and geodomes. Based on the precedents examined, yurts and huts were the more affordable and common option and were located in a provincial park. Geodome accommodations were typically privately operated on private properties and offered glamping or luxury camping experiences. Amenities provided at the geodome sites included spa features (sauna, Nordic spa, hot tubs etc.), and offered unique, amplified experiences in a peaceful forest setting.



▲ **Figure 21: Yurt**
Source: PitStop518



Figure 22: Geodome Site ▶
Source: Birchwood
Luxury Camping

Table 1: Summary of Precedent Accommodations – Provincial Parks

	Cypress Hills Provincial Park Aspen Ridge	Graburn Hut, Tom Trutt Hut, Medicine Lodge Hut, Resseor Lake Hut	Buffalo Pound Provincial Park	Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park	Echo Valley Provincial Park	Algonquin Provincial Park – Mew Lake
Location	AB	AB	SK	SK	SK	ON
Access	Vehicle	Ski-in/snowshoe	Vehicle	Vehicle	Vehicle	Vehicle
Type	Hut	Hut	Yurt	Yurt (or Resort room)	Yurt	Yurt or Cabin
Capacity	8	4; 6; 6; and 4	6	6	6	6
Heating	Electric	Wood Stove	Electric heater	Electric heater	Electric heater	Propane heat
Power	Electric power	Solar panel	Electric power	Electric power	Electric power	Electric power
Washroom	Outdoor	Outdoor	Outdoor	Outdoor	Outdoor	Outdoor
Kitchen/Food Prep	Mini Fridge	Wood Stove and sink	Propane camp stove	Propane camp stove	Propane camp stove	Yurt: Fire pit/grill Cabin: Fire pit/grill, small fridge, microwave
Other Features	Fire pit, picnic table	Fire pit, picnic table	Fire pit, picnic table, chairs, outside shelter	Fire pit, picnic table, chairs, outside shelter	Fire pit, picnic table, chairs, outside shelter	Fire pit, picnic table
Winter Camping Sites			available (electrical and non-electrical)	available (electrical and non-electrical)	available (electrical and non-electrical)	available (electrical and non-electrical)

4.7 Precedent Study Summary

4.7.1 Provincially Owned and Operated Facilities

Overall, in terms of providing activities and programming the Saskatchewan precedents are the most established. The precedents in Alberta and Ontario appeared to be set up where visitors were able to choose from a menu of activities to participate in. The Saskatchewan precedents also appeared to provide a wider range of activities to visitors, whereas the Alberta and Ontario precedents provided activities that were limited to hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. In addition to Saskatchewan locations providing more activity options, there were also programmed events led by Sask Parks that were hosted on a weekly basis. Generally, the findings are as follows:

- Site predominantly accessed by vehicles
- Outdoor washroom facilities (heated and unheated) without showers
- Yurts or huts for rustic experience and domes for glamping experience
- Electric, wood or propane heating
- Essentials included fire pits, picnic tables with some outdoor shelters provided
- Food preparation a combination of grills, propane and wood stoves, some with fridges
- Programmed and unprogrammed winter activities for small groups
- Some sites hosted winter festivals and events

For the Westcove Winter Staging Area, the Saskatchewan precedents are relevant examples due to the similar context, geography and climate.

4.7.2 Privately Owned and Operated Facilities

Privately owned and operated facilities are highly variable in their offerings ranging from luxury geodomes, yurts and tiny cabins to tents. Some sites offer an off-grid experience without electricity or Wi-Fi. Generally, these sites range from a cluster of domes or yurts to an isolated site with 1 – 2 domes for a more immersive nature experience. These sites were clearly oriented to a more “high end” visitor experience.

Corresponding support amenities include saunas, washroom facilities to varying degrees (from simple outhouses, to fully functional washrooms), cooking areas, and fully staffed conference/hotel spaces. When these privately owned and operated facilities become increasingly developed, it usually as a result of interest in becoming a destination wedding venue.

The outdoor winter activities at these sites were self-directed and oriented to nature viewing, snowshoeing, hiking and skiing. There was a focus on comfortable corresponding nighttime activities that involve fires, saunas and night sky watching.

5 Concept Plan Development

In addition to stakeholder engagement and collaboration, the development of the concept plan for the Westcove winter destination staging area was influenced by other considerations, including a site analysis of the area, environmental considerations, and precedents of similar winter areas.

5.1 Site Analysis and Plan Considerations

The purpose of the site analysis is to identify assets, opportunities, and constraints of the potential winter destination staging site using all the available relevant data, studies, mapping, strategies, documents and policies. Sources included County, Provincial and regional data assets. This desktop analysis examined existing and surrounding land uses, amenities and facilities, infrastructure/utilities, environmental features, topography, road and access network, parking, seasonal facilities and other features. Key users and stakeholders were interviewed to assist with the gathering of site information.

A formal site visit with project representatives was conducted in June 2024 and other informal site visits were held in May 2024 and August 2024.

5.1.1 Site Selection

Upon initiation of this project, the consensus for the location of the winter destination site was for the south sector of the Westcove site, near the access road. The factors influencing the selection of this location were: ease of maintenance (snow clearing); security of summer campground area by not allowing access to site assets not in use; proximity to lake; existing parking area; proximity to existing

winter Nordic trails; flat topography for winter parking and activities; and nearby County Road access to the site.

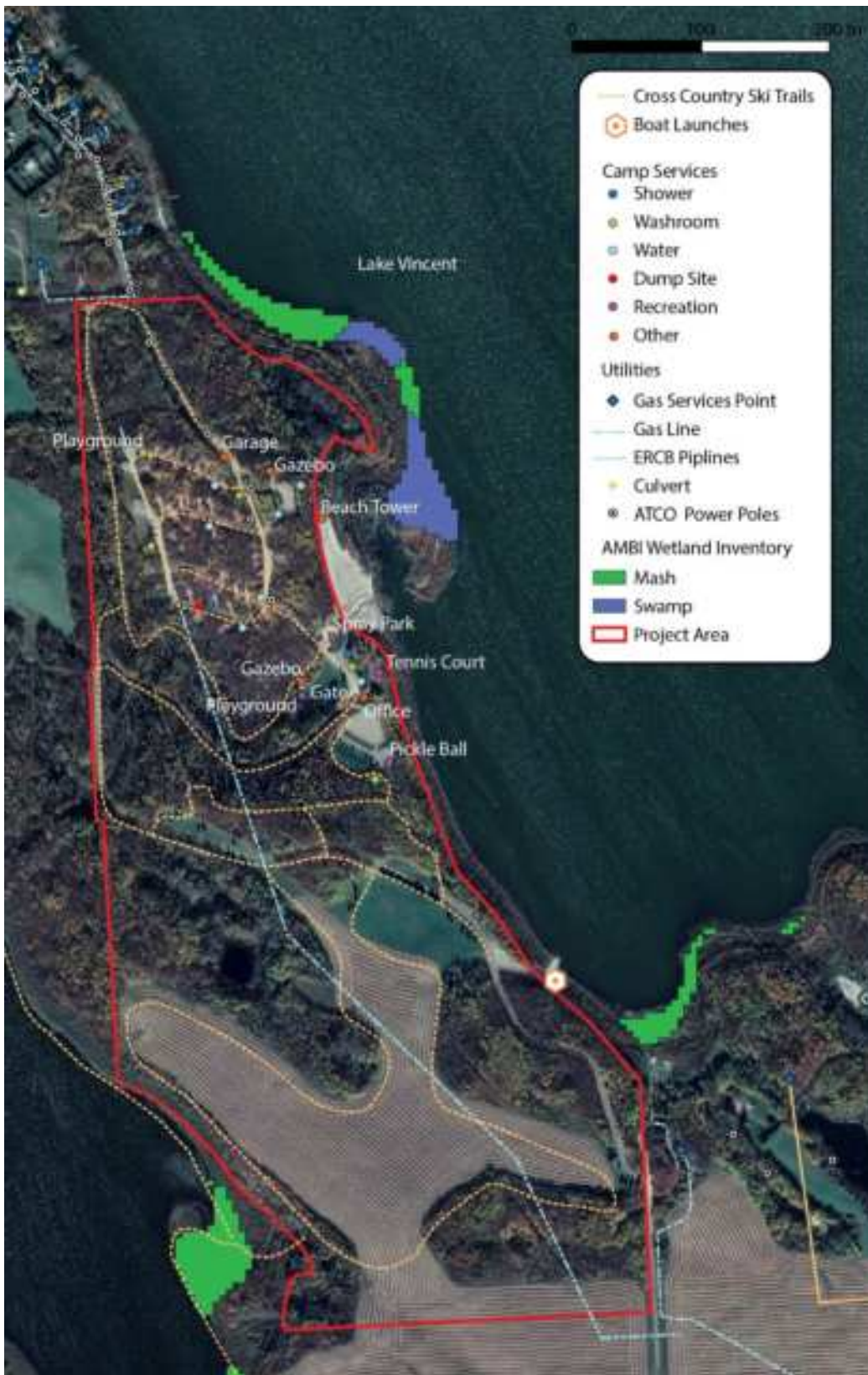
5.1.2 Site Utilities Overview

To inform the site utilities overview, site servicing information and mapping provided by the County of St. Paul was reviewed. Presently, the Westcove site is served by utilities that are needed for the operation and maintenance of the existing campground that is operated in summer season. The Westcove Municipal Recreation Area is presently serviced by:

- Well water
- Power (combination of overhead and underground)
- Vault toilets
- Cellular service
- Sanitary RV Dump Station
- Wi-Fi, provided by MCSnet.

The utilities and services for the Westcove site are concentrated in a campground service hub that does not extend into the south sector of site. **Figure 23** identifies the servicing/utilities, and site features surrounding Westcove and the Campground.

▼ Figure 23: Site Facilities and Servicing Overview Map – Westcove Area



5.1.3 Environmental Considerations

Based on the review of the Province’s Fish and Wildlife Information System (FMSI 2021), no internationally or nationally recognized protected areas were identified within the plan area. Review of provincial database on sensitive and/or environmentally significant areas produced the following: the plan area is within the Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Northeast Region, Fish Watershed NB1 Unit, Wildlife Management 00258 Unit, the North Saskatchewan River Tertiary Water Basin.

The plan area is within the Grassland and Parkland (Central) Natural Region, Sensitive Raptor Range (Bald Eagle), Sharp-tailed Grouse Survey Area and Other Sensitive or Endangered Species Area. Additionally, the areas of SW31-50-24-W4M and SE19-50-24-W4M are classified as environmentally significant areas (ESAs). A search of the Alberta Merged Wetland Inventory Index on the Province’s (2021) GeoDiscover Map Viewer indicated the potential presence of swamp, fen, bog, and marsh wetlands in the project area. Ducks Unlimited Canada Data was also referenced. Ground truthing of the area confirms that there are no significant wetland areas upland of Vincent Lake.

5.1.1 Topography, Grades and Wind Protection

A relatively flat site for winter activities and parking is preferable due to snow and ice conditions, allowing for ease of maintenance and vehicle/pedestrian user safety. For a tubing and sliding chute, a gentle to moderate slope is preferred with an opportunity for a long and safe “run out” for users.

The upper flat plateau west of the entrance road is an ideal location for activity, event staging and parking. Building and facility sites could be in this area to take

advantage of proximity to parking and other site amenities. A large flat site can enable event staging and can be configured in numerous ways for a variety of events and activities. A steeper slope near the existing boat launch provides a gentle but interesting tubing slope with an opportunity for a safe run-out to the lake.

Temporary accommodation such as yurts or geodomes should not be located in large open areas and are best situated in sheltered treed areas. Protection from prevailing winds is generally provided by the existing tree cover on the north edge of the site.

5.1.2 Access, Parking and Circulation

The Westcove site is accessed by a paved, all-weather road. Parking can be readily accommodated on the site west of access and in the east lake parking area, with the opportunity with contraction and expansion based on event requirements. It is possible to develop temporary pedestrian pathways to accommodate large volumes of pedestrians safely. No additional access needs to be provided to the north sector of Westcove. Winter maintenance of on-site and off-site access roads should be considered an ongoing priority for pedestrian and vehicular safety and access.

5.1.3 Lake Ice Activities

The ice cover/thickness of Vincent Lake is highly variable based on seasonal local climate and weather conditions including snow cover. Safe ice thickness will influence the timing and safety of events that depend on access to the lake including Crokicurl, ice skating ribbon, hockey, ice fishing and tubing. Also, heavy maintenance equipment will need to be accommodated for the development and maintenance of activity areas. Generally, safe ice thickness may be difficult to achieve in the early winter season.

5.1.4 Natural Features

The site's most compelling feature is its proximity to the west shore of Vincent Lake and the adjacent rolling topography within a nearby densely forested natural environment. The densely wooded perimeter environment contributes to a "Winter Wonderland" visual quality for the site. The existing network of Nordic and hiking trails has had a low impact on the natural environment through the need for only limited tree clearing activity and damage. The variable forested open edges of Vincent Lake provide viewpoints and vistas to this visual asset.

5.1.5 Dark Sky

The peak of winter solstice brings darkness in late afternoon and should be considered as an asset with the opportunity to attract night sky and northern lights enthusiasts. Lighting design should balance the need for lighting for safety and desire for visitors to see the night sky.

The opportunity to strategically vary lighting levels and locations should be considered in the design and provision of lighting (i.e. lighting and safety

requirements are different for a winter music festival than for a night sky retreat).

5.1.6 Target End Users

The Winter Destination Strategy needs to reach a broad range of end users, while maintaining regular user groups to support the operations of the site. Determining the target groups will inspire the site design and types of programming/events which should be considered for Westcove. The stakeholder engagement process has uncovered that various groups or people would be interested in using the site, if there were additional resources available. Please refer to **Section 3: Stakeholder Engagement**.

A market strategy could be developed to determine and identify additional users and groups as well as events and programming that would promote the use of the site. In addition, there is a significant opportunity to host family-friendly activities, festivals and events to boost the profile of the site and increase the number of visitors to the site. Complementary festivals and events that tie into ski events could also be an interesting way to bring new users to the site.

6 Concept Plan

The final concept plan focuses on easily achievable amenities, and those which are currently present on the site. The concept plan has been reduced from the original vision, no longer including the existing campsite area situated further north. The vision is to provide numerous opportunities for winter activities, ranging from day use to overnight bookings. **Figure 24** shows the concept plan. A larger scale plan can be viewed in Appendix A.

The final concept plan was developed in a series of iterations, after multiple engagement conversations were held with various user groups. The original concept was larger, encompassing the campground and spreading out the activity nodes over a larger area. As the concept was further developed and discussed, it was determined that the winter area should not include the north campground, as it is currently operational and there is no intention to detract users of the campground.

▼ Figure 24: Westcove Winter Staging Area Concept Plan



Legend

	Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Trails		Chalet Building		Parking
	Forest Trail Walk		Warming Area (Fire pit & small shelter)		Snowmobile Parking
	Snow Sliding/Tubing		Lookout Structure		Portable Washrooms
	Winter Road				
	Boardwalk				
	Property Line				

6.1 Amenities Building

The foundation of the Westcove concept is the development of an Amenities Building that could serve a diverse range of groups and events. Without having some sort of Amenities Building in place, the idea of having visitors utilizing the site for overnight stays is feasible, but less appealing. A small Chalet type building is seen as the focal point for the various winter activity nodes placed throughout the site in logical locations as well as an essential element that is required to complement and support the winter accommodations component of this site.

The programming of the Amenities Building will need to be informed by cost considerations, operations and maintenance, accommodation and event requirements. The stakeholder engagement for this project uncovered a diversity of ideas for the programming of an Amenity Building, ranging from providing overnight accommodations in a lodge setting to a modest building with washrooms, meeting space, commercial kitchen, showers and storage spaces. A Chalet as a service building within a modest footprint was suggested as having the highest opportunity for acceptance. The following is a suggested preliminary program within an approximately 3,500 square foot building footprint:

- Vestibule
- Meeting Space
- Open Social Room (capacity of 120-150 persons)
- Commercial Kitchen
- Washrooms
- Single shower rooms (2)
- Storage/Service room

The architectural design style of the building should be engaging, inviting and appropriate to the winter lake forest setting as well as the being the welcoming “front door” of the Westcove stie. The building’s form and lighting design could act as a site beacon and the main visual identity of the site.

Conventional stick-build construction should not be considered as the only delivery solution. Innovative building forms such as modular or prefabricated construction should be considered for a potential cost-effective building delivery solution. There may also be opportunities for staged building development depending on funding and site development.



▲ **Figure 25: Community Building/Chalet Example**
Source: Ashland Council

6.2 Winter Accommodations

Winter accommodations are envisioned as insulated yurts or geodomes located in the north sector of the site, within proximity to the Chalet, where additional support services such as kitchen, social room, washrooms, showers, etc., would be provided. The accommodation units would be serviced with heat (wood fired) and power, at minimum. An adjacent outdoor space provides an area for food preparation (firepit, propane stove), seating, picnic table, and wood storage.

For the initial phase, 6-8 accommodation units are proposed, however, fewer units could be provided to test the marketplace with this type of accommodation product. These accommodation units are proposed to sit on wood platforms or decks and be connected via a wood boardwalk.

Depending on the expectations of visitors and the market niche being served (i.e. “winter camping versus winter glamping”), the provision of visitor support services in a nearby heated building may or may not be essential, whether it be in a temporary structure or the permanent visitor center building.

6.3 Site Plan

The final site plan consists of activity zones where the Chalet is the focal point of the site with an adjacent event zone and overnight accommodations, which encompasses enough open area to allow for festivals, or a staging area. The Lakefront Activity Node allows for winter activities such as ice-fishing and skating.

6.3.1 Event Zone

The Chalet will anchor the Event Zone, placed near the north end of the zone, it provides a service hub for the site. Directly adjacent to the Chalet, the open space area provides the opportunity for activities which require extensive open space, such as winter festivals/events, and staging of other winter activities (hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, etc.). Temporary facilities (washrooms, gathering spaces, etc.) could be brought into this area to service various events. Some convenient parking will be required for the Chalet. It is assumed that parking for events is temporary and is located within the site. A permeable perimeter fence should define the boundary of the site so that the agricultural area is protected.



▲ **Figure 26: Camping Geodome**
Source: Jack Sweeney



▲ **Figure 27: Camping Yurt**
Source: GoGreen



▲ **Figure 28: Winter Festival**
Source: WonderTravel

Located west of the Chalet, a Winter Warm-up Node provides users an outdoor space to warm up, with firepits, seating, and ample space to set up temporary staging structures (pop-up canopies, etc.). Ideally, a permanent gazebo or other weather protecting structure will be installed near the fire pit facilities to provide additional shelter. This Winter Warm-up Node also serves the nearby overnight accommodation area.

The current ski trails operated and maintained by Lakeland Cross-Country Ski club meander throughout the Westcove area, but the trail heads are localized to the Event Zone. It is envisioned that trail activity is staged here providing users with space to prepare, put on their gear and stay warm at the open shelter area.

In the southerly area of the site, the future development could be a forest trail walk with a future overnight accommodation area. As an added feature, a future lookout structure could provide an interesting high vantage point of the area.

6.3.2 Lakefront Activity Zone

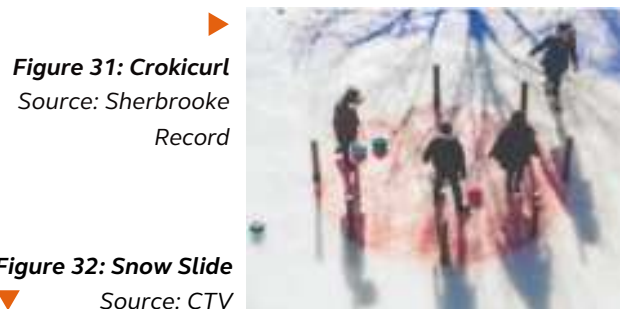
The Lakefront Activity Zone has been conceptualized for winter sports. Given the elevation change down to Vincent Lake, the opportunity exists for a sliding area adjacent to the lake access road. The Lakefront Activity Zone can operate independently, for day use, if needed. Temporary washroom locations, a warming area consisting of a small shelter and fire pit, and snowmobile parking are amenities available along the shoreline. The shoreline amenities complement the winter ice activities on Vincent Lake. A skating area can be cleared for various ice games (skating loop, curling, crokicurl, hockey, etc.), and there is future opportunity for ice fishing once the lake is repopulated with ample fish stock. Parking for the site is accommodated in the existing parking area north of the boat launch.



▲ **Figure 29: Winter Outdoor Shelter**
Source: MI Adventures



▲ **Figure 30: Solstice Festival**
Source: City of Toronto



▶ **Figure 31: Crokicurl**
Source: Sherbrooke Record

▼ **Figure 32: Snow Slide**
Source: CTV



6.3.3 Accommodation Area

The Accommodation Area consists of a series of yurts or geodomes on wood decks proposed to be located within the small, treed area situated north of the Winter Warm-up Node, framed by a rustic boardwalk providing safe access. The nearby outdoor shelter and warm-up area form a social node for the accommodations. The outdoor shelter could also provide a protected area for food preparation.

6.4 Sustainability

Given the location and environmental context of this site, consideration should be given to incorporating sustainability elements such as low impact development techniques, solar energy panels for power and lighting, water recycling /snow collection for non-potable water use, recycling and waste reduction measures.

An off-grid or hybrid servicing system could be considered to further reduce the environmental footprint of site improvements.

6.5 Shoulder Season and Summer Use

Due to the significant investment required for this project, consideration should be given to providing opportunities for summer and shoulder season use and events. With additional investments geared for summer use on the site, there could be opportunities to host events such as family reunions, corporate meetings, weddings, cornhole tournaments, summer music and arts festivals, and other private and public events. The geodomes could remain in place year-round to support additional accommodation options for these events.

7 Implementation

7.1 Order of Magnitude Capital Costs

High-level order of magnitude costing has been developed to inform decision making regarding the timing and sequencing of development and is not intended to provide a detailed capital cost estimate.

The following order of magnitude costing was developed using a defined set of physical program elements for the Westcove site. The costing related to events, ice activity facilities, portable toilets, etc.,

should be considered separately. The accuracy of these high order costs is highly dependent on the details around the final program for the site.

7.1.1 Amenity Building

The amenity building is separately considered due to the overall cost significance of this facility to this project. The order of magnitude cost is based on a building footprint of 3,500 square feet with a modest building program that includes elements such as a commercial kitchen, showers and washrooms, service areas and a large gathering room. Based on a typical building with these attributes, the expected per square foot cost is \$400 for stick build construction. The order of magnitude cost of a 3,500 square foot building footprint is therefore estimated at \$1,400,000.

Depending on design details, there may be an opportunity for some incremental cost savings utilizing modular construction techniques. The building program needs to be further refined and developed to determine functions and related construction and development costs.

The recently opened Visitor Center at Ellis Bird Farm in Lacombe, AB is an example of a 3,500 sq. ft. building that was built within a modest budget (see images below). This building has similar features including a large gathering space and kitchen. The St. Paul Reunion Station Building was identified as a good example of a building for this site. This building is owned by the Town of St. Paul and is a popular rental venue that accommodates 125 people with a full-size catering kitchen.



▲ **Figure 33: Ellis Farm Building Entrance**
Source: Flickr



▲ **Figure 34: St. Paul Reunion Station**
Source: Town of St. Paul

7.1.2 Site Development

The site development costs have been developed for the basic cost of site components such as grading, parking area development, landscape, site furnishings, outdoor structures, lighting, site services and related development fees. The site elements and their related costs are outlined in the table on the following page.

Table 2: Estimated Development Costs

Gravel Parking Area w/ Grading	\$50,000
Power/Electrical	\$90,000
Accommodation Power Services	\$25,000
Site Lighting	\$50,000
Landscaping	\$50,000
Boardwalk/Platforms	\$60,000
Site services - Water Well/Sanitary	\$200,000
Winter Open Shelter	\$130,000
Site Furniture	\$40,000
Signage	\$7,000
Perimeter Post and Rail Fence	\$60,000
Equipment Storage Container	\$10,000
Yurts (allowance)	\$90,000
Soft Costs (Permits and Fees)	\$30,000
Contingency	\$100,000
Total	\$992,000

Innovative approaches to the provision of services should be considered for this site. Depending on the timing of development, extent and capacity of facilities, and the desire for sustainable features, the provision of off-grid types of services should be considered. However, it is noted that at full development with a building, connection to power services and potable water (water well) will be essential.

7.2 Operations and Maintenance

Presently, the operations, maintenance and security of the Westcove site are managed and funded by the County during the camping season and as required throughout the year. There is an acknowledgement that this arrangement will continue in the future.

The development of new facilities, activity nodes and events on the site will require an additional layer of ongoing operations, maintenance and services that extend beyond basic requirements. Most critically, on-site management is required for accommodations. Items such as additional road maintenance, power supply, site snow clearing, festival site preparation, lighting set-up, safety management and other requirements will need to be considered and planned for.

7.3 Accommodation Vendors

The accommodation component could be operated and managed by a private vendor/concessionaire through a rental or leasing agreement with the County to allow for a more creative and specialized approach to help develop uniquely themed winter visitor experiences and opportunities. The agreement could include allowing vendors to bring in temporary structures/buildings such as cookhouses, showers/washrooms, storage units for specialized equipment, saunas, and winter activity equipment to support their business. Alternatively, if the facilities are developed through a combination of grants and public funds and are publicly owned, the fully developed site could be leased by the vendor.

7.4 Development Phasing

Strategic phasing of site development will need to be considered, given the potential of incremental and variable funding sourcing. In the initial stages, there are site uses such as outdoor festivals and events that do not require permanent site services or facilities and as such, these events can be hosted on the site with temporary services to help establish and promote Westcove as a winter staging venue as well as establish local and regional partnerships.

The development and success of the winter accommodation component will drive the requirements for supportive structures, buildings and services. The provision of the basic services such power, water and washroom services are important to have in place prior to the development of more complex amenities.

7.5 Next Steps

The information in this report will help support the next steps of the development process including the preparation of business cases, future municipal capital priority requests, development of local and regional partnerships and other related requirements to advance the next steps of development. This report is also intended to support project funding applications by STEP to Travel Alberta's Tourism Investment Program.













Appendices

Appendix A: Concept Plan: Westcove Winter Staging Area

Appendix B: Precedent Research Information



Legend

- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------|
|  | Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Trails |  | Chalet Building |  | Parking |
|  | Forest Trail Walk |  | Warming Area (Fire pit & small shelter) |  | Snowmobile Parking |
|  | Snow Sliding/Tubing |  | Lookout Structure |  | Portable Washrooms |
|  | Winter Road | | | | |
|  | Boardwalk | | | | |
|  | Property Line | | | | |

Sask Parks Winter Programming

Programming and Activities

The following are samples of guided and self-guided programs and activities that are offered in the winter months at Sask Parks provincial parks and recreation areas.

- **Pike Lake:** Saunter Through Snow: Guided Snowshoe Hike; Learn to Play Crokicurl; Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing (rentals available), skating, crokicurl, Park Activity Kits
- **Duck Mountain:** Saunter Through Snow: Guided Snowshoe Hike; Bonfire Skating Party; Ice fishing, cross-country skiing, tobogganing, skating, downhill skiing, snowshoeing (rentals available), snowmobiling, fat-tire biking, crokicurl, Park Activity Kits
- **Echo Valley:** Illuminated Snowshoe Stroll and Campfire; Cross-country skiing, hiking,

snowshoeing (rentals available), ice fishing, Park Activity Kits

- **Moose Mountain:** Cross-country Ski Adventure; Winter Wonderland Wanderings; Cross-country skiing (rentals available at Kenosee Inn), hiking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, tobogganing, crokicurl, ice fishing, Park Activity Kits
- **Cypress Hills:** Marvel at the Night Sky; Winter Fun Basecamp; Cypress Snowshoe; The Abominable's Walk; Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing (rentals available at Cypress Hills Resort), snowmobiling, disc golf, ice fishing, Park Activity Kits
- **Buffalo Pound:** Winter Fun Basecamp; Snowshoe to the Bison; Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing



Echo Valley Provincial Park, Saskatchewan

Accommodation Details

Access:	Vehicle
Type	Yurt
Sleeps	6
Heating	Electric space heater
Electricity	Electric
Washroom	Outdoor washroom
Food Prep	Propane camp stove
Other:	Fire pit, picnic table, chairs, outside shelter, axe
Pricing	\$85/night
	Winter camping sites are available
	Electrical sites: \$29/night
	Non-electrical sites: \$16/night



▲ Yurt

Source: GoGreen

Programming, Activities, and Other Amenities:

- Chalet
- Equipment Rentals: Snowshoes
- Interpretive programming
- 'Skate the Park' – 800 m skating loop through the park
- Skating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking (215 km of trails), ice fishing, Crokicurl, and Park Activity kits
- Ninja warrior course – 5` ninja slack line with obstacles, bouldering wall and a 50' zipline
- Wooden Barrel Sauna (operated by Back2Nature Wellness & Adventures)
- Tipi warming shelter
- Guided Activities (past events):
 - New to Nordic: guided ski and glide along a snow-covered 1.5 km trail. Participants will learn the techniques of set-track skiing.
 - Whimsical Wanderings Snowshoe Stroll: Learn snowshoes basics while strolling through twinkling lights in Echo Valley and meet mythical characters along the way.
- Echo Valley Provincial Park is adjacent to Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation and Pasqua First Nation. Community members there have been consulting on items within the park to share their culture, such as the Buffalo chainsaw carving at the park entrance, the Ojibway-style tipi used as a warm-up shelter in the winter, and for programming in the summer.

Buffalo Pound Provincial Park, Saskatchewan

Accommodation Details

Access:	Vehicle
Type	Yurt or Tent
Sleeps	6
Heating	Electric space heater
Electricity	Electric
Washroom	Outdoor washroom
Food Prep	Propane camp stove
Other:	Fire pit, picnic table, chairs, outside shelter, axe
Pricing	\$85/night
	Winter camping sites are available
	Electrical sites: \$29/night
	Non-electrical sites: \$16/night

Programming, Activities, and Other Amenities:

- Trails, disc golf, tobogganing
- Fat tire biking
- Chalet (former ski chalet)
 - has creative interpretive displays
 - equipment - toboggan
- Snowshoeing (self or guided) –
 - Guided “The Snowy Safari Snowshoe (Saturdays at 1pm), includes a park interpreter that will lead you through valley of Buffalo Pound and search for wildlife. 2km trip
 - Snowshoe through the Past (Saturdays at 3:30pm) – trip to Nicolle Homestead – stories of blizzards, family fun and settler life – historic stone home. 3.1 km trip



▲ **Buffalo Pound Provincial Park**
Source: Tourism Saskatchewan Canada

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Saskatchewan

Accommodation Details

Access:	Vehicle
Type	Yurt
Sleeps	6
Heating	Electric space heater
Electricity	Electric
Washroom	Outdoor washroom
Food Prep	Propane camp stove
Other:	Fire pit, picnic table, chairs, outside shelter, axe
Pricing	\$85/night
	Winter camping sites are available
	Electrical sites: \$29/night
	Non-electrical sites: \$16/night

Programming, Activities, and Other Amenities:

- Trails – foot and cross-country
- Snowshoeing:
 - Guided snowshoe hike “Life in the Lodgepoles Snowshoe Hike”
 - Galaxies and Moonbeams Snowshoe Night Hike
- Tobogganing, skating
- Yurts, winter campsite, or stay at The Resort



▲ Cypress Hills

Source: Tourism Saskatchewan Canada



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