

KISISKÂCIWANI-SÎPIY (SWIFT-FLOWING RIVER)

A Heritage River Designation Concept for
the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta

Stakeholder Engagement

What We Heard Report

April 2023

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Project Overview

PROJECT BACKGROUND

A collaborative community initiative, led by Smoky Lake County, has nominated the North Saskatchewan River across Alberta for designation as a Canadian Heritage River. The creation of a Designation Plan will honour and celebrate the river and its people, ensuring greater awareness and collaboration among jurisdictions and river-users to foster sustainable tourism, recreation opportunities, and ecological stewardship.

An engagement process will help ensure this Designation Plan promotes the recognition and celebration of the outstanding natural and cultural values of this iconic river.

Involvement from communities and organizations is essential to better understand, share, and maintain this important river system for generations to come.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

All engagement will aim to be:

- + **Inclusive:** Create a welcoming space for conversation that respects the diverse lived experiences of all participants.
- + **Accessible:** Make it easy to participate and access information. Consider diverse abilities, learning styles, and amount of time required.
- + **Meaningful:** Provide opportunities for participants to share ideas and concerns openly and authentically.
- + **Transparent:** Provide clear information about the process, how decisions are made, and report back on what we heard.
- + **Adaptive:** Be flexible to respond and adapt to the changing needs of participants over the course of the project.

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT GOALS



The purpose of this engagement is to:

- + Inform potentially interested and affected groups of the designation process underway
- + Make all relevant information about the process readily available to stakeholders
- + Gather meaningful input from a wide range of interests, areas, and partnerships
- + Authentically incorporate insights into the creation of the draft plan
- + Ensure all engagement reporting is clear, concise, and transparent and reflects both qualitative and quantitative information

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The engagement will be considered successful when:








- + Project awareness has increased, and participants feel well-informed about the process
- + Interested stakeholders feel they had adequate opportunity to contribute
- + Identified stakeholders are active participants throughout the process
- + Stakeholders take on a stewardship role in ongoing work/relationships after the close of this project
- + Project team demonstrates how public input has been considered to develop the draft plan
- + Support gathered from at least 66% of river-adjacent municipalities and Indigenous communities

PROJECT TIMELINE

The project began in the late summer of 2022, with engagement beginning in earnest in the fall. Informed by this engagement, development of the draft plan began in the spring of 2023, with a second outreach planned for the summer. Presentation to municipal governments will begin in August.

How We Engaged

Phase 1 Engagement was open for feedback from **October 2022 to February 2023**. To reach a wide range of river stakeholders, a variety of engagement methods and tools were used, ensuring there were multiple avenues to choose from to participate.

RESOURCES	DESCRIPTION	STATS	AUDIENCE	FORMAT
Inform				
	Project Webpage The online hub for all project information. smokylakecounty.ab.ca/m/nsr-heritage-river-chrs		Public	Online
	Direct Emails Direct emails to 236 stakeholder organizations representing diverse communities and interests.		Stakeholder Groups	Online
Engage				
	Online Story Collector Survey The online story collector provided participants with the opportunity to share their unique stories, perspectives, and experiences.	28 survey respondents	Stakeholder Groups	Online/Print
	Interactive Portal & Online Map This website included detailed information about the project as well as an interactive map to collect feedback on the specific reaches.	235 map pins	Stakeholder Groups	Online
	Public & Stakeholder Workshops 2 virtual workshop sessions were held with facilitated small-group discussions. Open to interested groups to register.	14 workshop attendees 11 organizations	Stakeholder Groups	Online/ Discussion
	Stakeholder Discussion Guide PDF booklet with key project material and interactive form fields to provide feedback as an organization.	3 guides collected	Stakeholder Groups	Online/Print
	Stakeholder Meetings Meetings with stakeholder groups held upon request.	6 meetings	Stakeholders	Online/ Discussion

Who We Engaged

As the heritage designation of the North Saskatchewan River is a non-statutory and strictly voluntary process, it is important to learn from the people affected by the river. As such this engagement sought to learn from a diverse range of opinions, experiences, and ways of life, so that a wide spectrum of perspectives are represented in the process.

The insights presented in this What We Heard Report represent the viewpoints of people and organizations who voluntarily selected to participate in engagement. Results are not necessarily representative of the perspectives of all communities who live, work, recreated or are otherwise impacted by the river valley.

TYPE OF GROUP	EXAMPLE GROUPS	ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE/ APPROACH
<p>FEDERAL & PROVINCIAL PARTNERS</p> <p>Government bodies that have a role in plan implementation</p>	<p>Includes Parks Canada, Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Infrastructure, Alberta Municipal Affairs</p>	<p>Gather insights and content and review plan content through one-on-one meetings and/or group workshops.</p>
<p>MUNICIPAL STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>Adjacent municipalities whose support is requested and where the river includes their territory.</p>	<p>Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) partners, and those otherwise identified by the County</p>	<p>Utilize existing County relations with each municipality to coordinate groups meetings. Identify select municipalities for one-on-one meetings to improve relations in order to elicit support or to receive more intensive content input and coordination).</p>
<p>KEY STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>Key stakeholders that have a direct role in designing the designation and concept plan, funding implementation, and/or content creation.</p>	<p>Includes NSWA, Transalta, EPCOR, Edmonton and Area Land Trust, River Valley Alliance, etc.</p>	<p>Gather insights and content from highly involved groups (e.g. NWSA, EPCOR) and review plan content. Achieve through one-on-one meetings and/or group workshops.</p>
<p>COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS (PRIMARY & SECONDARY)</p> <p>Groups and organizations that have varying levels of interest</p>	<p>Includes non-profit, user group, advocacy, and business organizations, across categories such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ecology + Recreation & Active Living + Recreation – River-Based + Heritage & Culture + Equity-Seeking + Agriculture + Industry + Tourism + Transportation + Community Development 	<p>Gather insights from specific perspectives of each organizations and areas of interest. Engagement methods may include online story collecting, interactive mapping, and virtual workshops. Distribute invite to participate to learn about each group's level of interest, capacity, and preferred method. Potential for follow-up to confirm plan content with the interested stakeholders</p>

Engagement Phases

The bulk of engagement with stakeholders has taken place over Fall/Winter 2022. Follow-up with select stakeholders will occur in Spring 2023, to confirm how findings have been incorporated into the draft North Saskatchewan Heritage Rivers Designation Plan. A final communications strategy at the end of the project will share the plan widely and garner support from partners and the public.

	PHASE PURPOSE	PHASE OUTPUTS
DISCOVERY PHASE FALL 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outreach and begin relationship building with stakeholders 2. Learn about the historical and current use of the river, and its importance/value to local communities. Learn about desired future uses of the river and its surrounding lands and what would be required to enable those uses 	Data and stories collected from stakeholders to incorporate into the development of the draft plan
CONCEPTION PHASE SPRING 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Review how data and stories have been incorporated into the draft plan 4. Review language and wording proposed in the draft plan 	Final comments received to finalize the plan
DISCOVERY PHASE FALL 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Share and celebrate the final plan 6. Understand how supportive stakeholders are for the proposed plan 	Documentation of support of the plan

What We Asked

A summary of the types of questions asked during this engagement follows:

WHAT WE ASKED	WHY WE ASKED THIS QUESTION
---------------	----------------------------

STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What priority programs, projects, or initiatives are you working on, or do you want to see, that this Designation Plan can help advance or support?
2. What is a key river insight, or unique information that your organization has to share about the River and thinks we should know to inform a Canadian Heritage Rivers designation?
3. How can you and other river users and experts help to steward and celebrate the North Saskatchewan as a Heritage River?
4. Are you inspired by any particular songs, music, stories, poetry, or other creative artwork about the North Saskatchewan River?

Please feel free to share any stories through this question, instead of, or in addition to, the online story collector and interactive map.

To understand how the river designation can support ongoing effort by stakeholder groups

ONLINE STORY COLLECTOR & INTERACTIVE MAP

Reach specific spatial comments were collected via an online interactive map tool, allowing participants to place pins on the map, using the prompts:

1. This place is / was important because...
2. More attention is needed here to...
3. I wish this was / this could be...

To better understand the historic and present day contributions of the river system.

Sidebar questions also solicited non-spatial personal stories and other feedback, these included:

- A. My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...
- B. Are you inspired by any particular songs, music, stories, poetry, or other creative artwork about the North Saskatchewan River in this reach?

INTERACTIVE MAP EXAMPLE

North Saskatchewan Heritage River Engagement

Please use the following tools to tell us more about the North Saskatchewan River and the surrounding lands, what it means to you, and what you'd like for its future!

If you'd care to leave your email address, we'd appreciate the opportunity to reach out further as the project develops!

email address

Reach 2 – Nordegg Bridge to Rocky Mountain H

Reach 2, beginning near Rocky Mountain house, includes Provincial Recreation Areas such as Aylmer, Saunders, Horburg Provincial Recreation Areas. Popular canoe routes through this reach provide important recreational draws, although significant rapids pose challenges and hazards. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals. This Reach also contains Critical Habitat for Bull Trout, protected at a federal level under the Fisheries Act. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 3a (Historic Archaeological Site), 4a,p (previously recorded archaeological and palaeontological resources) and 5a (high potential for archaeological resources). Historic site is noted southwest of Rocky Mountain House.

Instructions

1. Select a reach from the dropdown box above
2. Click on the button in the upper left of the map
3. Select the general type of comment you'd like to make from the given options
4. Enter a brief comment into the text field and select one or more tags relating to your comment
5. Click SAVE and your comment will appear on the map

Please use the text boxes below to tell us more about what this reach of the North Saskatchewan River means to you

Reach 2 – Nordegg Bridge to Rocky Mountain House

Please select a type of prompt

- This place is/was important because...
- More attention is needed here to...
- I wish this was/This could be...

Cancel

Reach 1
Reach 2
Reach 3
Reach 4
Reach 5
Reach 6
Reach 7
Reach 8

Leaflet | Powered by Esri | Esri Canada, Earthstar Geographics, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NRCan, Parks Canada

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Overall Summary

During engagement with stakeholder groups, several common themes emerged that will inform how the designation concept is framed and focused.

ALIGNING RECREATION AND PRESERVATION

Many comments highlighted the need to balance recreation with the preservation of the natural river environment. Concerns around the wake impacts of motorized boats were raised. Many comments highlighted that the river valley has an unrecognized potential as a world-class recreational fishery, including sturgeon and walleye. They also shared concerns about the degradation of fish habitat due to surrounding land use.

Next Steps:

- + Highlight stretches of the river which provide wilderness experiences
- + Work with landowners to minimize the impact of economic activities on the river system
- + Promote the river as a sport fishery to increase tourism in appropriate areas away from sensitive habitats

ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY

Many comments highlighted the value that the river valley provides to wildlife, including stories of the impacts that wildlife viewing has had on the experience of river use. The need to preserve and improve the quality of riparian vegetation was highlighted, as well as the need to maintain regional connections through the ravines and creeks which make up the river system.

Next Steps:

- + Identify and improve riparian health
- + Ensure that regional wildlife connections are identified and preserved

RIVER ACCESS

Improved river access was identified as a critical need throughout much of the river system. Old ferry crossings, bridges, and private lands were flagged as important potential areas for this access. Safe hand-launches and bail-out points were raised as an important consideration in enabling increased recreational use of the river. Balancing motorized access with the need to preserve the feeling of wilderness while on the river was also highlighted. The need for emergency vehicle access was also raised. In the surrounding lands, there is a need for improved staging areas for recreational use of all types, to ensure that viewpoints, parking, and camping can be done safely and with the comfort of visitors in mind.

Next Steps:

- + Identify long stretches of the river where bail-out points would improve the safe and flexible use of the river
- + Work with Alberta Transportation and private land owners to develop new access points
- + Balance motorized access to preserve the wilderness experience

CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

Along with river access, camping opportunities along the river were also seen as key aspects for increased use of the river. Improved campsites on islands was desired. Concerns about camping in sensitive ecosystems were also raised, along with the need to balance the feeling of wilderness and serenity with recreational uses.

Next Steps:

- + Identify appropriate areas for new campsites that avoid sensitive ecosystems
- + Ensure campsites are well maintained to avoid degradation

STEWARDSHIP

Many expressed the desire for river stewardship initiatives, including river clean-up, inventories, storytelling, and improved understanding of the river system.

Next Steps:

- + Provide educational opportunities for communities to learn about the river and its adjacent lands to help potential stewards find an element about the river that they can connect with
- + Explore opportunities for citizen science initiatives to allow people to share their knowledge and improve the overall understanding of this river system
- + Highlight areas of the river in need of clean-up efforts

WATER QUALITY

Many comments highlighted the need to preserve water quality, sharing concerns about the impacts of mining, agriculture, forestry, industrial activity, and urban refuse on the experience of the river. People also shared stories of their use of water from the river for drinking, play, and for fishing.

Next Steps:

- + Highlight the need to share information about water quality and how it varies across each reach
- + Communicate ways in which the impacts of actions on the land impacts the water quality of the river
- + Provide opportunities to learn about why the areas next to and influenced by water are important for the health of both the water and the land
- + Develop an interest in the activities that clean water supports

INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION

Many participants identified the importance of Indigenous knowledge and stewardship in the lands and waters of the North Saskatchewan. There was a desire to see Indigenous history and culture acknowledged and shared, to see creation of Indigenous cultural gathering places, and to see special protection afforded to sites and natural features that are central to Indigenous teachings and cultural practices.

Next Steps:

- + We will continue to develop a persistent and ongoing outreach with Indigenous Nations and Communities to understand their priorities for the River Valley, and how they would like to be involved in place-making and stewardship
- + We will include opportunities to protect culturally significant places, create cultural gathering places and share important histories

GRASSROOTS SOLUTIONS

Some people raised concerns about the impacts the designation process may have on their own way of life, or their ability to self-govern. Concerns were raised about increased transparency, government control, and the desire to see their own grassroots efforts lead actions in their own communities.

Next Steps:

- + Work to highlight grassroots initiatives to support the work of the people who know the river best
- + Ensure that regional efforts are transparent and well-informed to avoid over-reach and relieve concerns of the intent of these efforts
- + Amplify local voices to develop collective support for the objectives of river-using communities

Project Study Area Boundaries

While the designation will be restricted to the river itself, the study area for engagement follows from a 5-km buffer around the riverbed. This was selected to allow for stakeholder input on the recreational, cultural, and ecological heritage of the surrounding landscape.

River Reaches

As the nominated portion of the North Saskatchewan River is so far-reaching, the decision was made to partition the study area into 8 reaches, each comprising a 2–3 day float through relatively similar conditions. These reaches were then used to guide engagement input, ensuring that people were easily able to orient themselves, and focus their attention on the areas they know best. These reaches include:

- + Reach 1 – Banff to Abraham Lake
- + Reach 2 – Nordegg Bridge to Rocky Mountain House
- + Reach 3 – Rocky Mountain House to Drayton Valley
- + Reach 4 – Drayton Valley to the Highway 770 Bridge
- + Reach 5 – Highway 770 Bridge to Edmonton
- + Reach 6 – Edmonton to Pakan
- + Reach 7 – Pakan to Elk Point
- + Reach 8 – Elk Point to Alberta Border

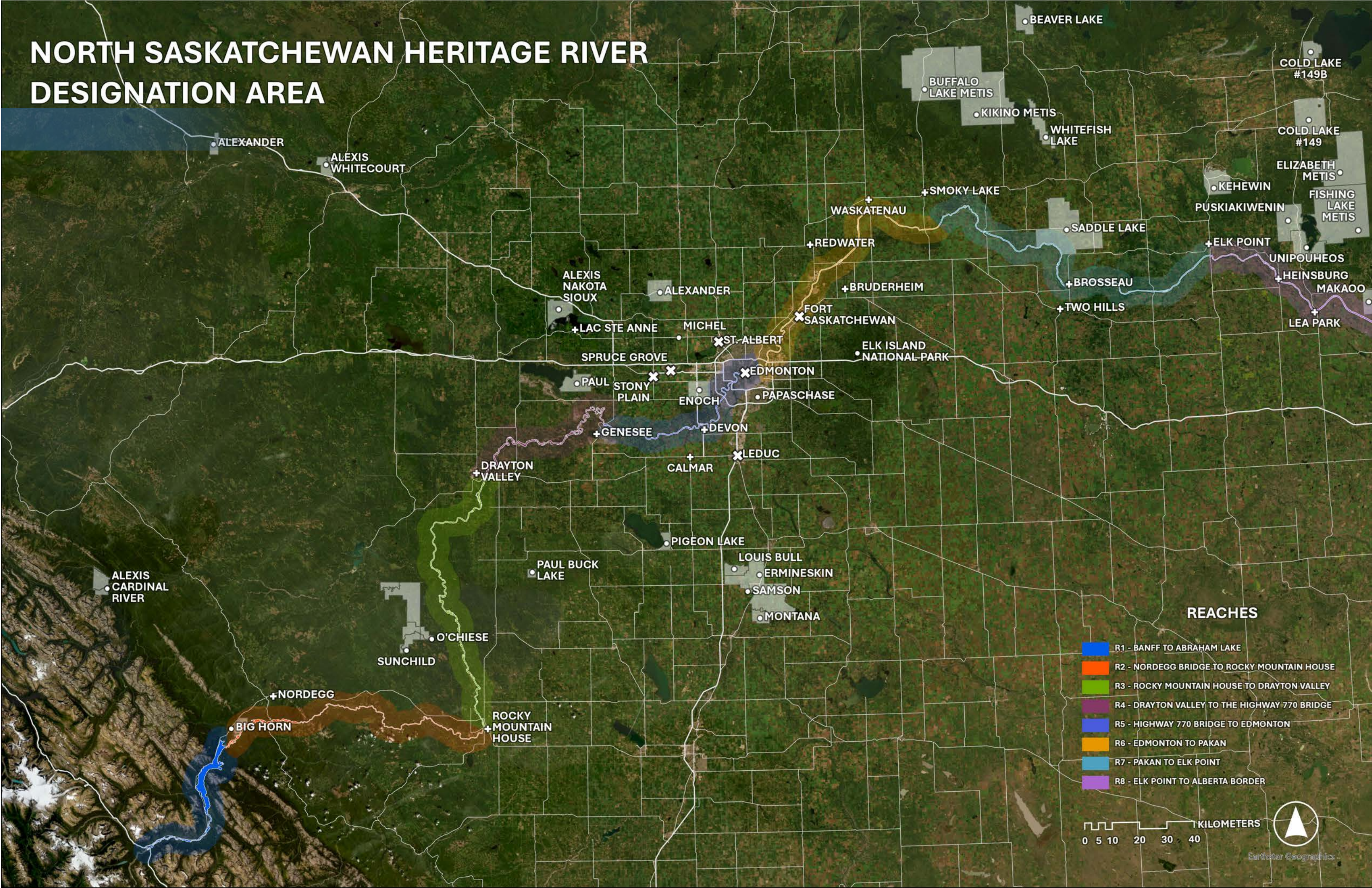
The following pages include a summary of findings for each reach.

Comment Classification

During the synthesis of engagement comments, a number of overarching themes were identified, allowing comments to be classified according to a range of types. These types include:

- + Scenic value
- + Historic resource
- + Interpretive potential
- + Protected area
- + Tourism opportunity
- + Access
- + Natural feature
- + Development
- + Service
- + Economic use
- + Recreation opportunity
- + Infrastructure need
- + Concern

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE RIVER DESIGNATION AREA



- ### REACHES
- R1 - BANFF TO ABRAHAM LAKE
 - R2 - NORDEGG BRIDGE TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE
 - R3 - ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE TO DRAYTON VALLEY
 - R4 - DRAYTON VALLEY TO THE HIGHWAY 770 BRIDGE
 - R5 - HIGHWAY 770 BRIDGE TO EDMONTON
 - R6 - EDMONTON TO PAKAN
 - R7 - PAKAN TO ELK POINT
 - R8 - ELK POINT TO ALBERTA BORDER



Reach 1

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 1 – Banff to Abraham Lake

Reach 1 begins in Banff National Park, a national protected area, and intersects Provincial Parks and Recreation areas as well, including Thompson Creek Provincial Rec Area, Kootenay Plains Provincial Rec Area, and Douglas Fir Natural Area. The David Thompson highway affords easy access to staging areas throughout this reach, and additional public recreational infrastructure is being developed today. Abraham Lake is an iconic tourist draw to this area throughout the year, including frozen methane bubbles popular with photographers. Summer use of the lake poses hazards due to high winds, leading to frequent emergency responses. The lake itself has been developed due to the construction of a hydroelectric dam at the eastern edge of the lake, an important economic contributor to the province.

First Nations Lands include the Stoney Nakoda First Nation, northeast of Abraham Lake. There are numerous provincially designated environmentally sensitive areas in Reach 1 including ranges for Grizzly Bears, Caribou, Mountain Goats/ Sheep, and Threatened Plant Species, providing unique habitat for a diverse range of species. The North Saskatchewan River and associated tributaries also provide Critical Habitat for Bull Trout, protected at a federal level under the Fisheries Act. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class A (highest sensitivity) and Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent this reach with identified values of 4a,c, (previously recorded cultural and archaeological resources) and 5a (high potential for archaeological resources). Cultural occurrences are noted northeast of Abraham Lake.

ACCESS

- + Cline River Heliport is an important existing access for back-country experiences

SERVICES

- + Minimal services in this area

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Iconic views of David Thompson Country
- + Very beautiful views throughout this reach
- + River views from the highway however narrow roads and blind corners
- + Suspension bridge over the North Saskatchewan River
- + Nearby Crescent Falls is beautiful when the river is high
- + Siffleur Falls
- + Preacher's Point methane bubbles!

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Monument to Canadian Airborne Forces

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- + Lots of Bouldering / Rock Climbing / Ice Climbing opportunities throughout this area
- + Great lake fishing when the water is low

NATURAL VALUES

- + Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Numerous existing guiding operations in this area
- + Abraham Lake / Transalta operations
- + Forestry operations

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + Guided backcountry experiences
- + Multi-day connections from foothills parkland into Banff and beyond

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + David Thompson history

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + Banff Park needs to be a willing partner in connecting the Glacier Trail to highway 93. It isn't cleared and there is a lack of willingness to see it completed
- + Offer visitor-focused amenities such as comfort camping, kitchen shelters, hiker/ biker sites
- + The Topham Suspension bridge is slowly failing at the east in-river tower due to erosion and should be repaired
- + Enable year-round recreation through infrastructure improvements to aging sites
- + Improved parking and washroom facilities at staging areas

CONCERNS

- + Methane bubbles – presumably Abraham Lake is a significant source of greenhouse gases
- + Does the dam allow for fish passage? Does the lake provide suitable habitat for fish?
- + Reduce vehicle and non-Indigenous use of this area
- + Often sheep on road
- + Better vehicle pullouts are needed to allow people to view the scenery safely
- + OHV management in this area is improving, but is still resulting in significant impacts. Additional restrictions to reduce noise and surface impacts
- + Noise and impacts from heli-site
- + Non-motorized boats can get pushed into the lake by the wind, requiring rescue

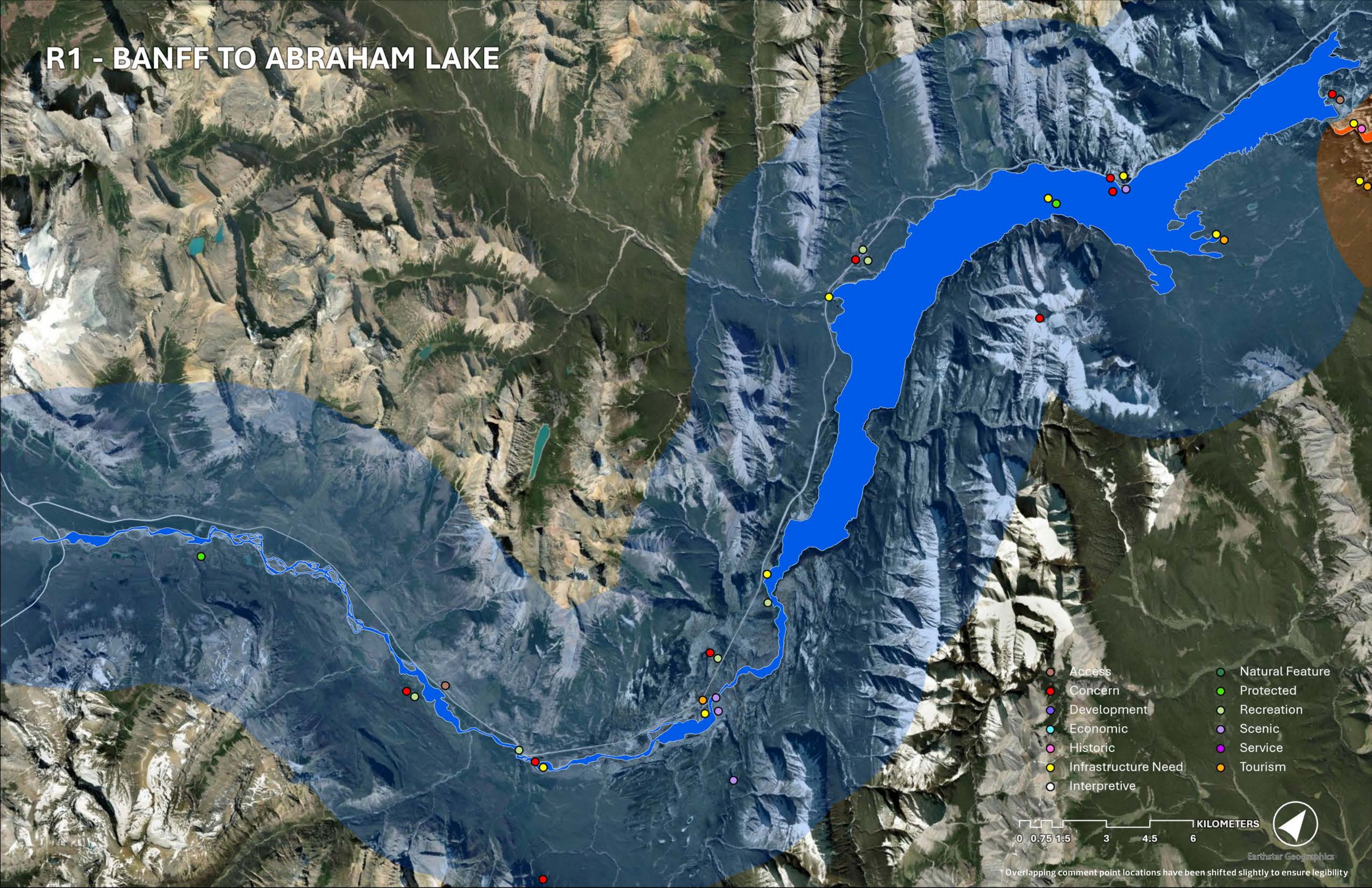
My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"... personally memorable, but utterly insignificant in comparison to the losses of the Indigenous peoples of the area from the building of the highway and Bighorn Dam. All features and locations of this area should be renamed with their Indigenous names."

Comment Classification Summary



R1 - BANFF TO ABRAHAM LAKE



Reach 2

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 2 – Nordegg Bridge to Rocky Mountain House

Reach 2, beginning near Rocky Mountain house, includes Provincial Recreation Areas such as Aylmer, Saunders, Horburg Provincial Recreation Areas. Popular canoe routes through this reach provide important recreational draws, although significant rapids pose challenges and hazards. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals. This Reach also contains Critical Habitat for Bull Trout, protected at a federal level under the Fisheries Act. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 3a (Historic Archaeological Site), 4a,p (previously recorded archaeological and palaeontological resources) and 5a (high potential for archaeological resources). Historic site is noted southwest of Rocky Mountain House.

ACCESS

- + Additional river put ins would be desirable.

SERVICES

- + Nordegg is a key service hub

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Beautiful rapids and river confluences
- + Wilderness areas

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Former Phoenix Ferry
- + Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site

NATURAL VALUES

- + Brierlies Rapids
- + Devils Elbow
- + Clearwater River and Bighorn River confluences

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Forestry operations have been a significant economic input

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + A world class river paddling route if Alberta Parks and/or the county stepped in to facilitate good services
- + Group camping at Aylmer PRA
- + Existing guided recreation opportunities

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + Natural heritage and connections to the river
- + Economic developments and historic impacts

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + Build some riverside paddling campsites that are sustainable
- + Improve the self-propelled trail opportunities on south side of river

CONCERNS

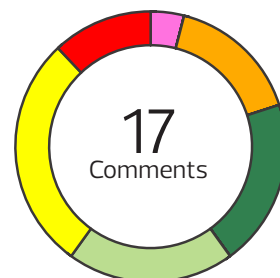
- + Limit noisy jetboats
- + Limit coal, mineral and O/G activity in eastern slopes
- + Manage noise from use and surroundings along full stretch of river. Jet boats, compressors, highway noises etc. can be remarkably persistent for full reach from this segment to the border
- + Watch OHV degradation in PLUZ. Do not allow unsustainable trail use, but enable trail activities that are low impact and can be managed

My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"I first paddled this reach 50 years ago, and it is the premier 3-5 day canoe trip in Alberta: the water is challenging in places, the scenery spectacular, the on-stream camping is very good and it is accessible."

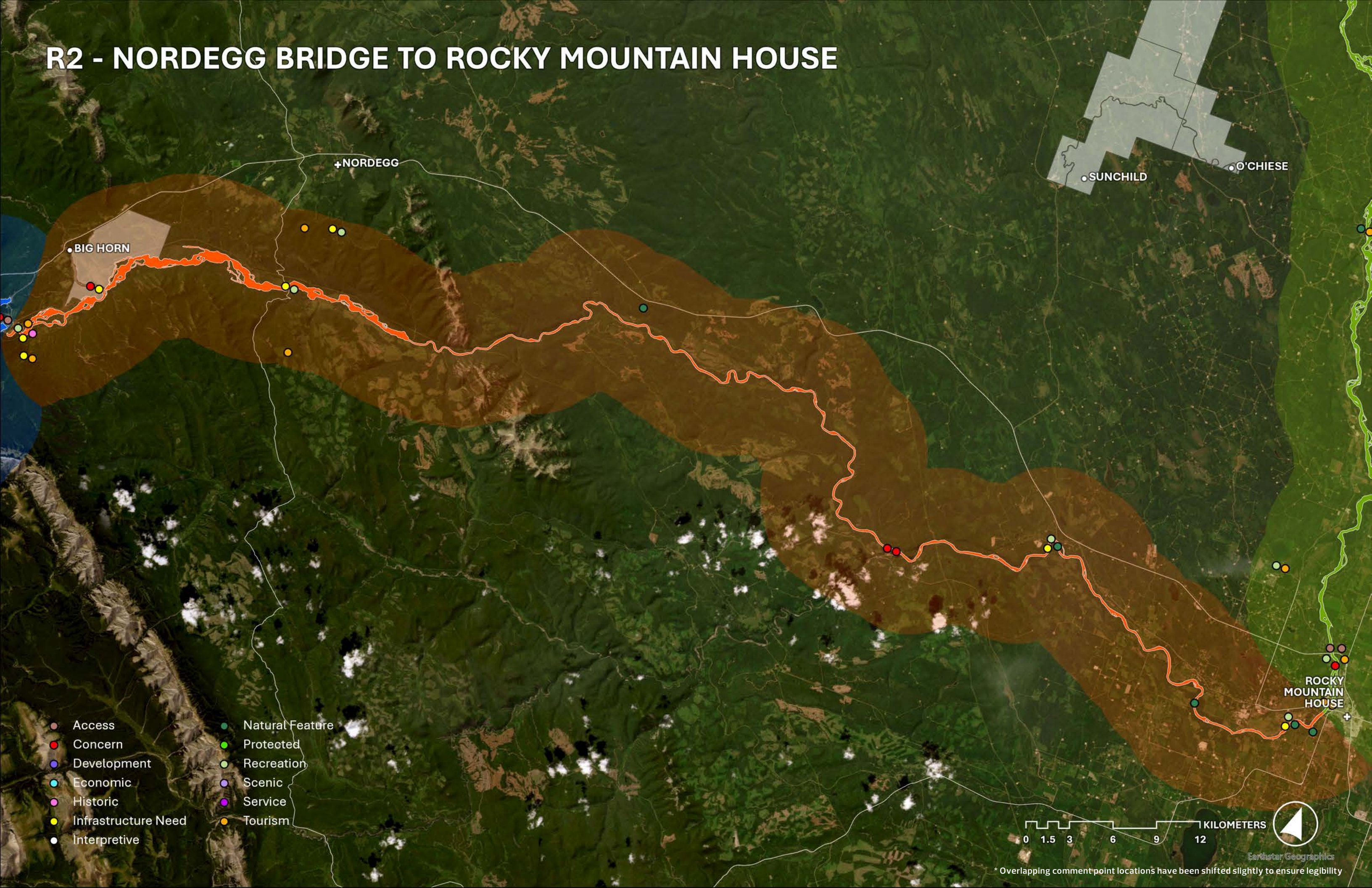
Comment Classification Summary

Reach 2



- scenic
- tourism
- service
- concern
- historic
- access
- economic
- interpretive
- natural feature
- recreation
- protected
- development
- infrastructure need

R2 - NORDEGG BRIDGE TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE



NORDEGG

SUNCHILD

O'CHIESE

BIG HORN

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE

- Access
- Concern
- Development
- Economic
- Historic
- Infrastructure Need
- Interpretive
- Natural Feature
- Protected
- Recreation
- Scenic
- Service
- Tourism



Earthstar Geographics
* Overlapping comment point locations have been shifted slightly to ensure legibility

Reach 3

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 3 – Rocky Mountain House to Drayton Valley

Reach 3 encompasses the area stretching from Rocky Mountain House to Drayton Valley and includes Provincial Protected Areas such as the Mill Island Natural Area. Lack of easy public access to the river through this reach results in quiet natural river experiences. Beautiful white sand beaches and numerous islands provide idyllic recreational opportunities. Extensive historical exploration, fur trading, logging, and settlement through this area provides interpretive opportunities and tourism potential.

First Nations lands include the O'Chiese First Nation and Sunchild First Nation. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals. This Reach also contains Critical Habitat for Bull Trout, protected at a federal level under the Fisheries Act. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 4a,p (previously recorded archaeological and palaeontological resources) and 5a,p (high potential for archaeological and palaeontological resources).

ACCESS

- + Well-used river access points

SERVICES

- + Rocky Mountain House and Drayton Valley provide services

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Steep banks of the river provide isolation and a wilderness setting

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Boggy Hill was a staging area for David Thompson

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- + Fishing and river floating
- + Camping along the river
- + Former site of the Motion Notion festival

NATURAL VALUES

- + Brazeau and Baptise River confluences
- + Sand beaches along the river

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + Camping at Crimson Lake and Brazeau Reservoir
- + 3 counties touch in this reach
- + The Cowboy Trail passes through this reach
- + The North Saskatchewan River Park & Rodeo Grounds

CONCERNS

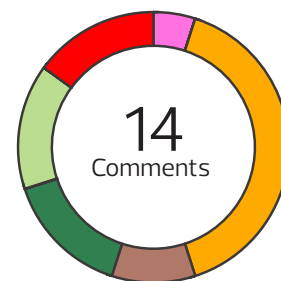
- + Industrial impacts along the river have made a mess

My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"I first paddled this reach in on an overnight weekend trip some 51 yrs ago. It is a fine wilderness paddle in the middle section, and it offers good back country camping, and often good wildlife watching."

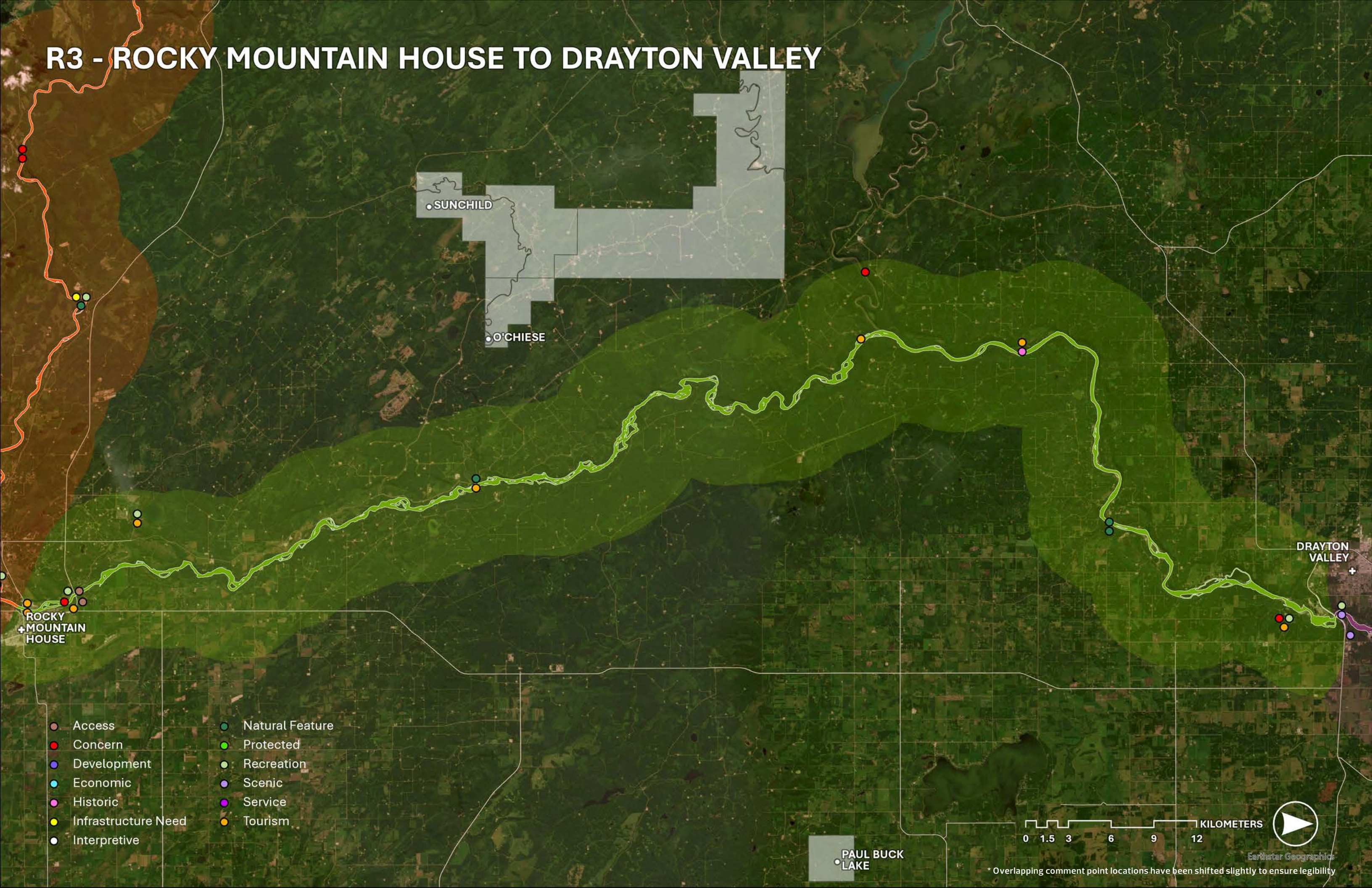
Comment Classification Summary

Reach 3



- scenic
- tourism
- service
- concern
- historic
- access
- economic
- interpretive
- natural feature
- recreation
- protected
- development
- infrastructure need

R3 - ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE TO DRAYTON VALLEY



SUNCHILD

O'CHIESE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE

DRAYTON VALLEY

PAUL BUCK LAKE

- Access
- Concern
- Development
- Economic
- Historic
- Infrastructure Need
- Interpretive
- Natural Feature
- Protected
- Recreation
- Scenic
- Service
- Tourism

0 1.5 3 6 9 12 KILOMETERS



* Overlapping comment point locations have been shifted slightly to ensure legibility

Reach 4

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 4 – Drayton Valley to the Highway 770 Bridge

This stretch of the river has extensive cultural, natural, and recreational values, including prehistoric settlements, evidence of Indigenous westward migration, and European fur trading, mining, and settlement. In recent decades white sand beaches have been the site of numerous festivals and recreational gatherings. Today, the isolated natural riparian lands provide important tourism potential.

Reach 4 includes Provincial Protected Areas such as St. Francis Natural Area and Genesee Natural Area. Just north of the North Saskatchewan River is the Paul First Nation, adjacent to Wabamun Lake. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals, as well as a sensitive raptor range for Bald Eagles, and a Sharp-tailed grouse survey area. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat. The reach does not contain federally designated critical fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 4a (previously recorded archaeological resources) and 5 a, p (high potential for archaeological and palaeontological resources).

ACCESS

- + Numerous river access points

SERVICES

- + Drayton Valley services

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Stunning cliffs

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Gold panning
- + Former Berrymoor Ferry crossing

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- + Nordic skiing areas
- + Fantastic wildlife viewing
- + Fishing

NATURAL VALUES

- + Nationally significant bird area
- + Very important Burtonsville area should be a national urban park

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Substantial aggregate extraction areas

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + Campgrounds
- + Guided river trips

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + Lac St. Anne is a spiritual site
- + HBC Buck Lake House
- + Nelson House
- + Fort Whitemud
- + First Nations

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + Hand launch, non-motorized camping on all major islands

CONCERNS

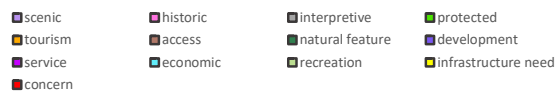
- + The environmental intactness of the north Saskatchewan river in this area is vulnerable as threatened by urbanization pressures and Parkland County development
- + Safer, easier river access needed

My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"Over the past 40 years I have paddled this reach often, the lower sections with university classes, my scout troop and the canoe club. For many years I was the steward for the Burtonsville Island Natural area, within itself offers many activities."

Comment Classification Summary

Reach 4



R4 - DRAYTON VALLEY TO THE HIGHWAY 770 BRIDGE

PAUL

DRAYTON VALLEY

GENESEE

- Access
- Concern
- Development
- Economic
- Historic
- Infrastructure Need
- Interpretive
- Natural Feature
- Protected
- Recreation
- Scenic
- Service
- Tourism



Blazeau County, Parkland County, Maxar
* Overlapping comment point locations have been shifted slightly to ensure legibility

COMMENT SUMMARY

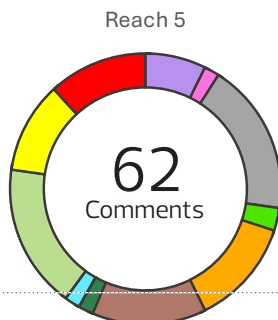
Reach 5 – Highway 770 Bridge to Edmonton

Reach 5 includes the area surrounding the City of Edmonton in the capital region of the province. This reach sees the greatest total visitation from surrounding communities and tourism operations. First Nations lands include the Enoch Cree Nation. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals, as well as a sensitive raptor range for Bald Eagles, and a Sharp-tailed grouse survey area. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class A (highest sensitivity) and Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat and does not contain federally designated critical fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 4a (previously recorded archaeological resources) and 5a,p (high potential for archaeological and palaeontological resources). An additional provincial park has been proposed around the Big Island area in the southwest of the city lands, which is undergoing public engagement.

My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"I have canoed and picked up lots of garbage floating and stranded on this river. We are lucky to have it and wish that we could do more to protect it."

Comment Classification Summary



- scenic
- tourism
- service
- concern
- historic
- access
- economic
- interpretive
- natural feature
- recreation
- protected
- development
- infrastructure need

ACCESS

- + Constable Chelsea Park is a key public river access/egress. However the access road can be muddy and steep
- + Formalized hand launches are needed in busy areas
- + Devon Boat launch is a starting point for a lot of canoe and paddling adventures
- + Prospector's Point is a key access
- + Edmonton River Lot 1

SERVICES

- + A key staging area for river use

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Devon Cliffs shows layers of geological history
- + The Terrwilligar and Fort Edmonton footbridges provides river views
- + New Walterdale Bridge is an iconic Edmonton view
- + The Legislature
- + Some impressive log jams have been on the river for a decade or more
- + The Wolf Willow Stairs are iconic

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Former Holburn Ferry
- + Former Town of Jasper Place
- + Big Island provincial park has significant history
- + The Edmonton Queen riverboat
- + Gold panning
- + Ravines separate Devon and Edmonton boundaries

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- + Trails in the Coates Conservation Area
- + Extensive informal mountain bike trails in Edmonton
- + The 100km trail of the River Valley Alliance has significant recreational potential
- + Tippy Hippy camping
- + Lots of wildlife and rec opportunities (e.g. easier non-motorized float access from Edmonton)
- + Very popular unsanctioned walking, running, MTB and fatbike trails. All season.
- + Rabbit Hill Waterski Area

NATURAL VALUES

- + Coates Conservation Area, nature preserve, dinosaur bones found here
- + Whitemud Creek is an important wildlife corridor
- + Big Island provincial park should be left alone to maintain its ecological integrity

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Major power generation area – coal mining and water cooling

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + EPCOR Riverwatch
- + Improved river access at Rossdale could make this an increased tourism draw in the region
- + New National Urban Park provides important opportunities

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + Geological history of the North Saskatchewan
- + The 100km trail of the River Valley Alliance has significant interpretive potential
- + The Walterdale area has significant indigenous history, including grave-sites.
- + Erosional sites resulted in houses falling into the river. An important reminder to not build your house along the erosional edge of a river
- + End of the world. Former Kellior road – showing the erosional force of the NSR
- + Nearby Big Lake and Lois Hole Provincial Park

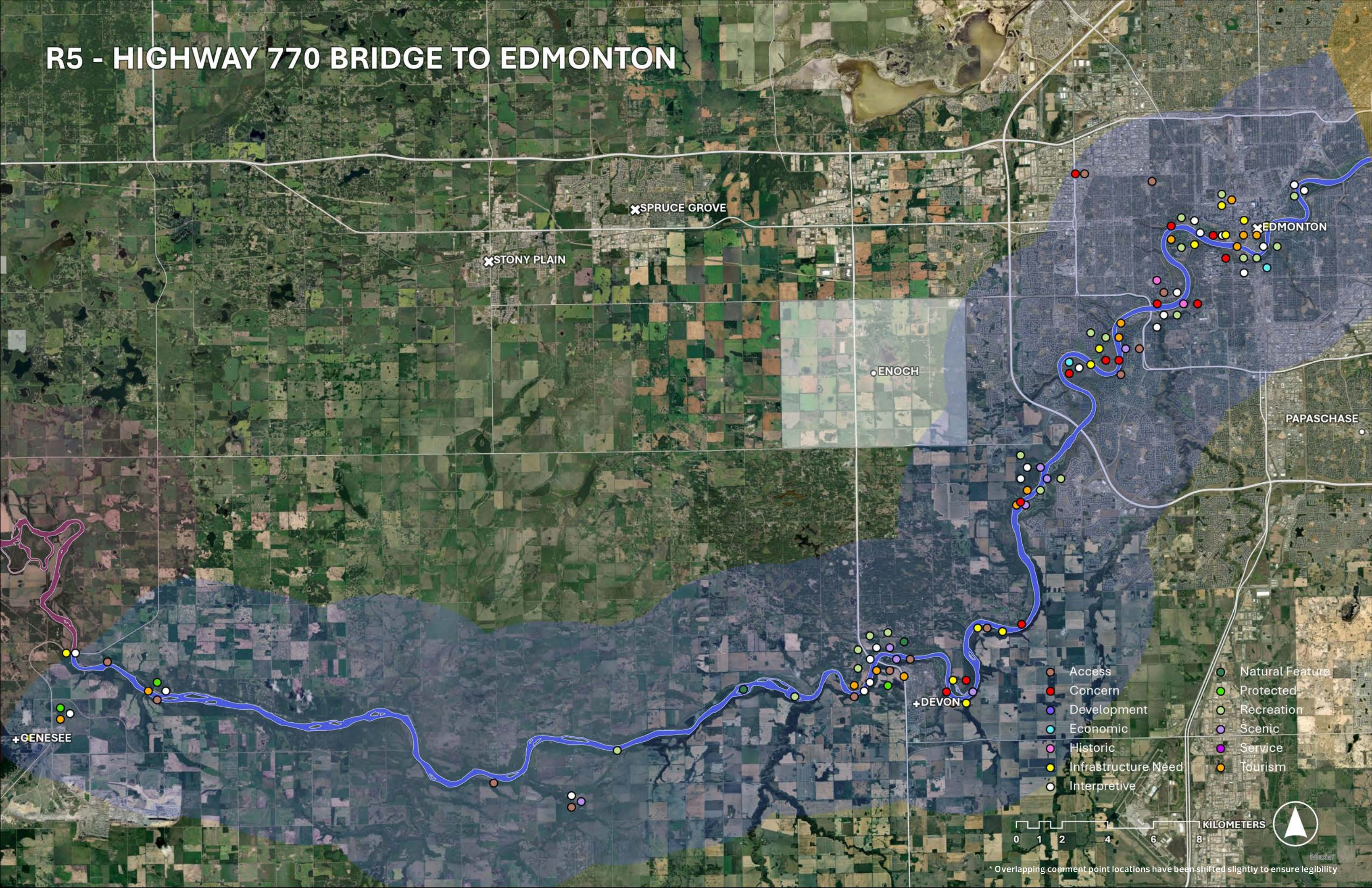
INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + Greater non-motorized river access and potentially camping

CONCERNS

- + Do not permit commercial activities at the boat launches
- + Gold course runoff affects water quality
- + Jet boats ruin the river experience along this and other stretches. Much more attention is needed to regulating noise and wake
- + Wake from boats impacts unstable banks
- + Concerns around dog impacts to the river and surrounding natural areas
- + Water treatment intakes pose safety risks

R5 - HIGHWAY 770 BRIDGE TO EDMONTON



Reach 6

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 6 – Edmonton to Pakan

Reach 6 includes the areas northeast of Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, up to Smoky Creek. Provincial Protected areas include the Redwater Natural Area. These lands have seen extensive historical and present day use as industrial areas, and significant water licenses granted for economic activities. These industries have acted as important drivers for the development of central Alberta over the past century, but have resulted in disturbances that exist to this day.

Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals, as well as a sensitive raptor range for Bald Eagles, and a Sharp-tailed grouse survey area. A Great Blue Heron Colonial Nesting Bird area is identified where Beaverhill Creek enters the North Saskatchewan River. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat and does not contain federally designated critical fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 4a (previously recorded archaeological resources) and 5a,p (high potential for archaeological and palaeontological resources).

ACCESS

- + Public access at Fort Victoria aka Pakan, former ferry crossing
- + Former steamboat landing (on private land)
- + 'The Fishing Hole', private river access (the landowner sometimes gives permission)

SERVICES

- + Fort Saskatchewan

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Incredible trees through stretches of this reach
- + Iconic 'House in the Middle of the Road' visible from river

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Extensive fur trading and European settlements

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- + Camping opportunities
- + Fort Saskatchewan has a valued mountain bike trail network
- + Fishing
- + Future Strathcona County Regional Park

NATURAL VALUES

- + Gold Bar Delta (only delta on the North Saskatchewan River)
- + Red Water Natural Area
- + Sturgeon River, Redwater River, Waskatenau Creek confluences
- + Nearby Beaverhills Creek Biosphere Reserve
- + Connections to Elk Island National Park

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Alberta Industrial Heartland and Designated Industrial Zone
- + Nutrien Fertilizer Plant
- + Tourism and river guiding
- + Major aggregate extraction

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + Lions campground

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + Historic Old Fort Trail and Victoria Trail
- + Victoria Park cemetery
- + Former Bears Ears reserve
- + Fort Augustus
- + Former Fort Edmonton
- + NWMP Fort Saskatchewan (built in 1875)
- + Victoria District National Historic Sites and River Lots
- + Métis Crossing Cultural Gathering Center
- + EPCOR public relations and education programs
- + Remote cameras
- + Skaro Shrine
- + Plaque site

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + River Island should be improved for camping! Great mid-way point from Fort Sask to Métis Crossing

CONCERNS

- + Ensure connectivity between the river and the creeks
- + Astotin Creek connection to Beaverhills Creek and the river, lacking connectivity

My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"In the spring of 1875 construction began at Fort Saskatchewan under Inspector William D. Jarvis. The Fort was originally referred to by some at the time as "Sturgeon Creek Post," and by the Cree as "Si-ma-gan-is" meaning "Soldier's House." During the winter of 1874-75 at Fort Edmonton, people of the settlement came to Inspector Jarvis "... to demand that the barracks should be built at Edmonton. They did not use much tact, and they were trying to coerce the wrong man. ... I have no doubt that if the settlers had let him alone he would have built the new post on the opposite side of the river. As it was, he chose a position 20 miles east, where he thought there would be a good railway crossing." Samuel B. Steele"

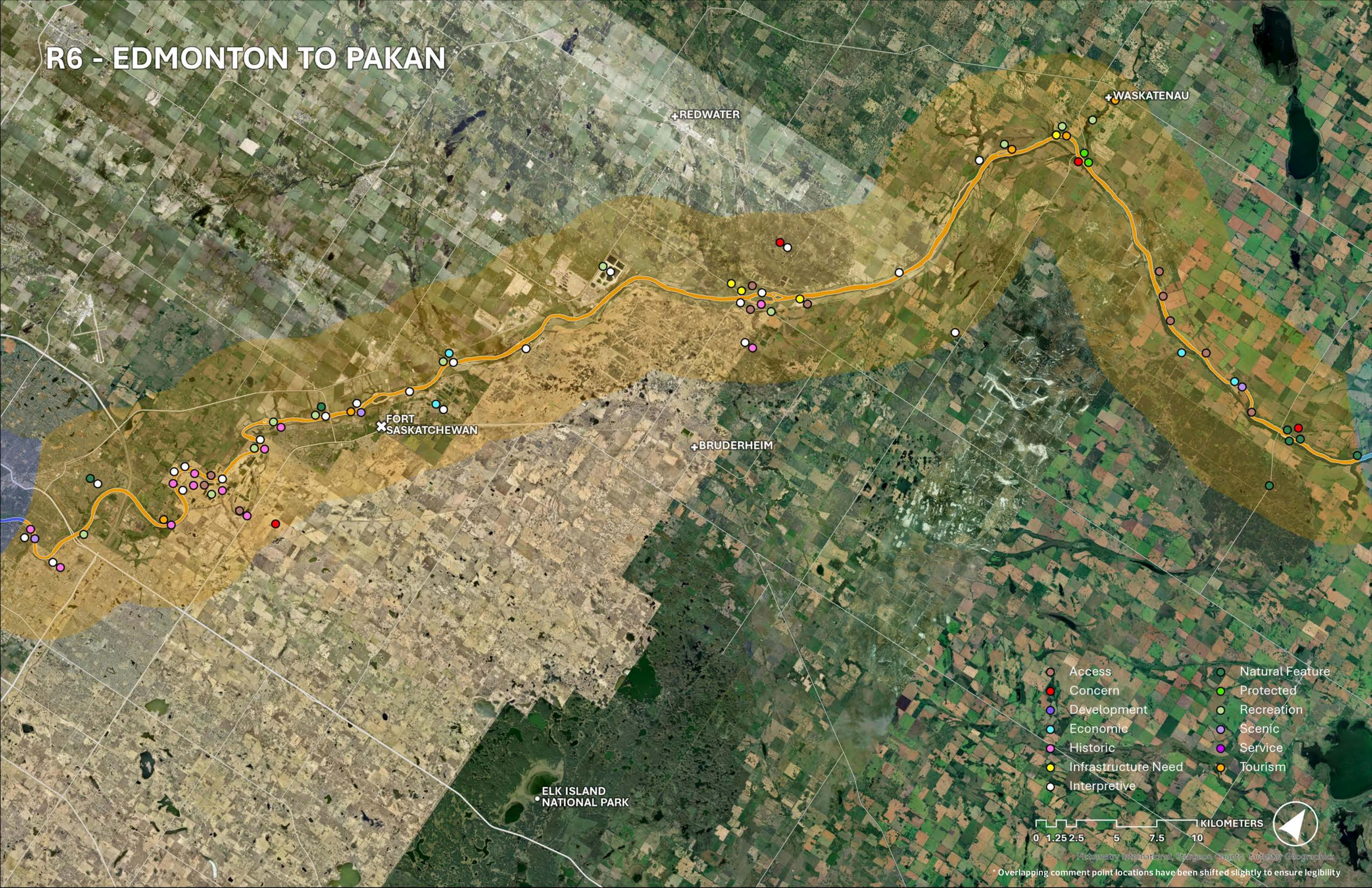
Comment Classification Summary

Reach 6



- scenic
- historic
- interpretive
- protected
- tourism
- access
- natural feature
- development
- service
- economic
- recreation
- infrastructure need
- concern

R6 - EDMONTON TO PAKAN



+REDWATER

+WASKATENAU

FORT SASKATCHEWAN

+BRUDERHEIM

ELK ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

- Access
- Concern
- Development
- Economic
- Historic
- Infrastructure Need
- Interpretive
- Natural Feature
- Protected
- Recreation
- Scenic
- Service
- Tourism



Photometry International, Sturgeon County, Earthstar Geographics
* Overlapping comment point locations have been shifted slightly to ensure legibility

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 7 – Pakan to Elk Point

Reach 7 is centered around the Saddle Lake First Nation. Several Alberta Conservation Association sites are identified including Spruce Hills, Aspen Hills, North River, Stoney Lake, and Death River. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat and does not contain federally designated critical fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 4a (previously recorded archaeological resources) and 5a,p (high potential for archaeological and palaeontological resources).

ACCESS

- + Old ferry crossings could be new river access points

SERVICES

- + Elk point is an important service center, including a hospital and airport

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Old settlements and forts

NATURAL VALUES

- + Bellis Natural Area
- + Smoky Creek and White Earth Creek confluences

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Alberta Seed Improvement Center
- + Major aggregate extraction

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + Northern Lights RV Resort

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + Saddle Lake Cree Nation Reserve
- + Former Carlton Trail
- + Former Fort White Earth (aka Edmonton House III)
- + Peter Fiddler Peace Park and Statue

INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + Additional river access locations
- + More connected trails

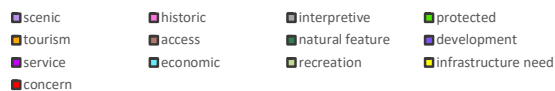
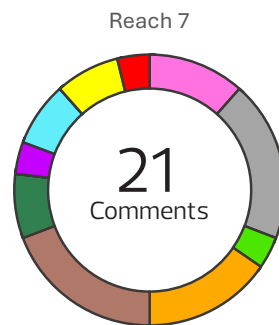
CONCERNS

- + The river should have great fishing but its the least producing out of all the rivers vs the Bow or Athabasca.
- + Existing river access under bridges are often very steep and difficult to exit from.

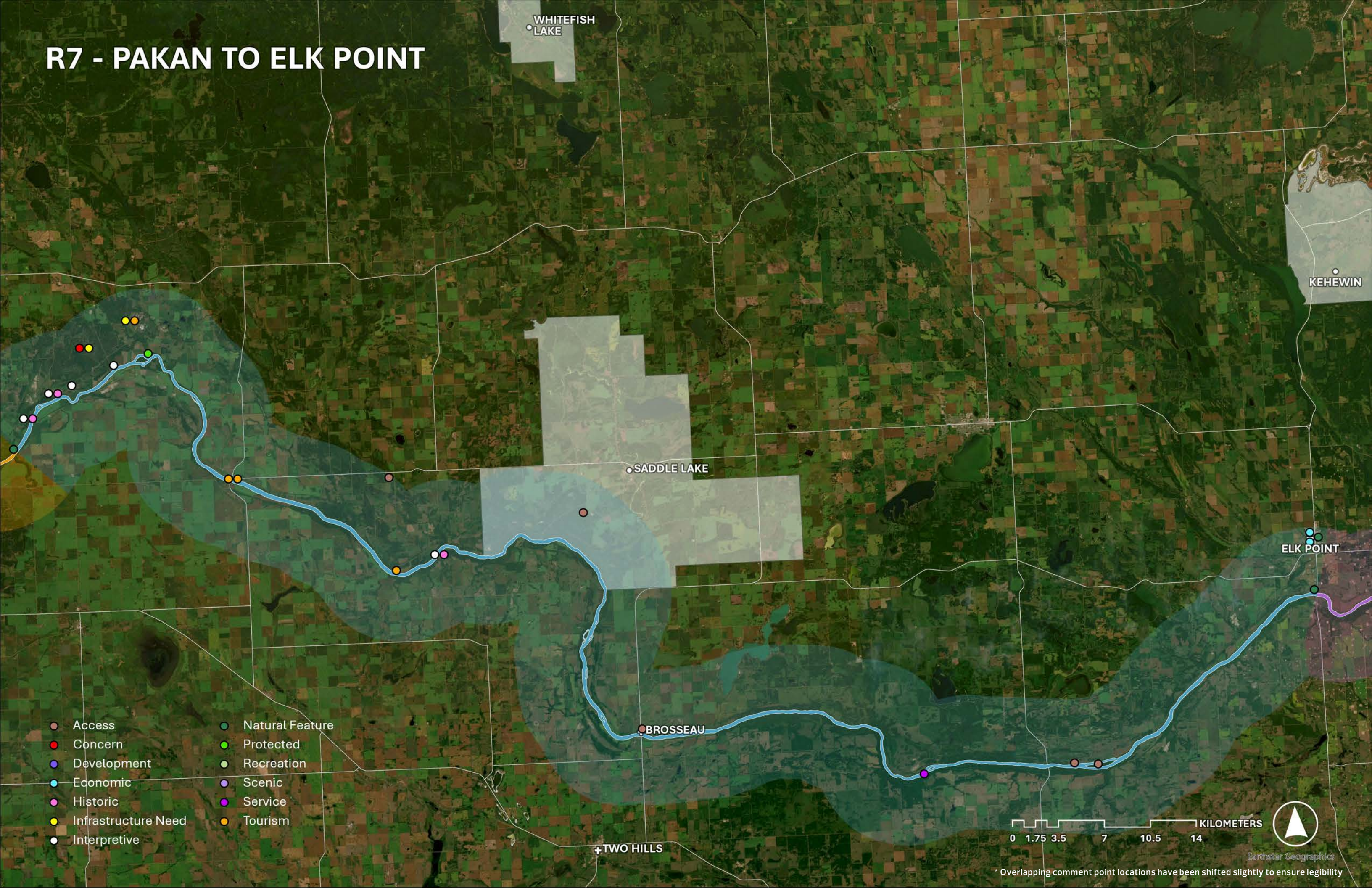
Are you inspired by any particular songs, music, stories, poetry, or other creative artwork about the North Saskatchewan River in this reach?

“As a child we listened to many sacred stories and marriage stories. Women from different areas would be transported through the river system (canoe) to join men. One story stands out is a Pasquyak story (this family name is where my late mom originates from family wise) men (who lived near the old creamery south west of the reserve) would meet their new wife. This period of wife transport was practiced before the treaty period when Saddle Lake was a district.”

Comment Classification Summary



R7 - PAKAN TO ELK POINT



WHITEFISH LAKE

KEHEWIN

SADDLE LAKE

ELK POINT

BROSSEAU

TWO HILLS

- Access
- Concern
- Development
- Economic
- Historic
- Infrastructure Need
- Interpretive
- Natural Feature
- Protected
- Recreation
- Scenic
- Service
- Tourism



* Overlapping comment point locations have been shifted slightly to ensure legibility

Reach 8

COMMENT SUMMARY

Reach 8 – Elk Point to Alberta Border

Reach 8 ends at the Alberta/Saskatchewan border. First Nations and Métis Lands in this reach are extensive, including Frog Lake First Nation surrounding Frog Lake, Fishing Lake Métis Settlement surrounding Fishing Lake, and the Onion Lake Cree Nation surrounding Onion Lake on the Alberta/Saskatchewan border. Provincially designated sensitive wildlife areas include a Key Wildlife and Biodiversity zone which provides a wildlife movement corridor for large mammals. Provincial watercourse classifications include Class C (moderate sensitivity) fish habitat but does not contain federally designated critical fish habitat. Historical resources are found along the full extent of this reach with identified values of 4a (previously recorded archaeological resources) and 5a,p (high potential for archaeological and palaeontological resources).

ACCESS

- + Limited current access, former ferry crossings are an opportunity

SERVICES

- + Elk Point is key service area

SCENIC QUALITY

- + Major viewpoints identified

HERITAGE VALUES

- + Long history of First Nations and early settlement
- + Frog Lake history

NATURAL VALUES

- + Stream confluences

ECONOMIC VALUES

- + Development of the Riverview subdivision

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- + Jet boat adventures

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

- + Frog Lake is a major cultural site, including the story of the North-West Rebellion
- + Fort George and Buckingham House Provincial Historic Site
- + The Windsor salt plant, near the hamlet of Lindbergh, is now closed but was a significant economic boon to the area
- + Former Carlton Trail

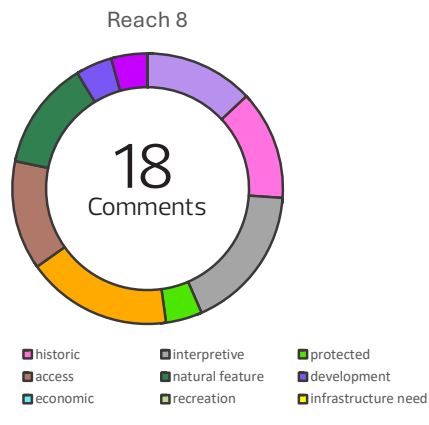
INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- + Additional access points

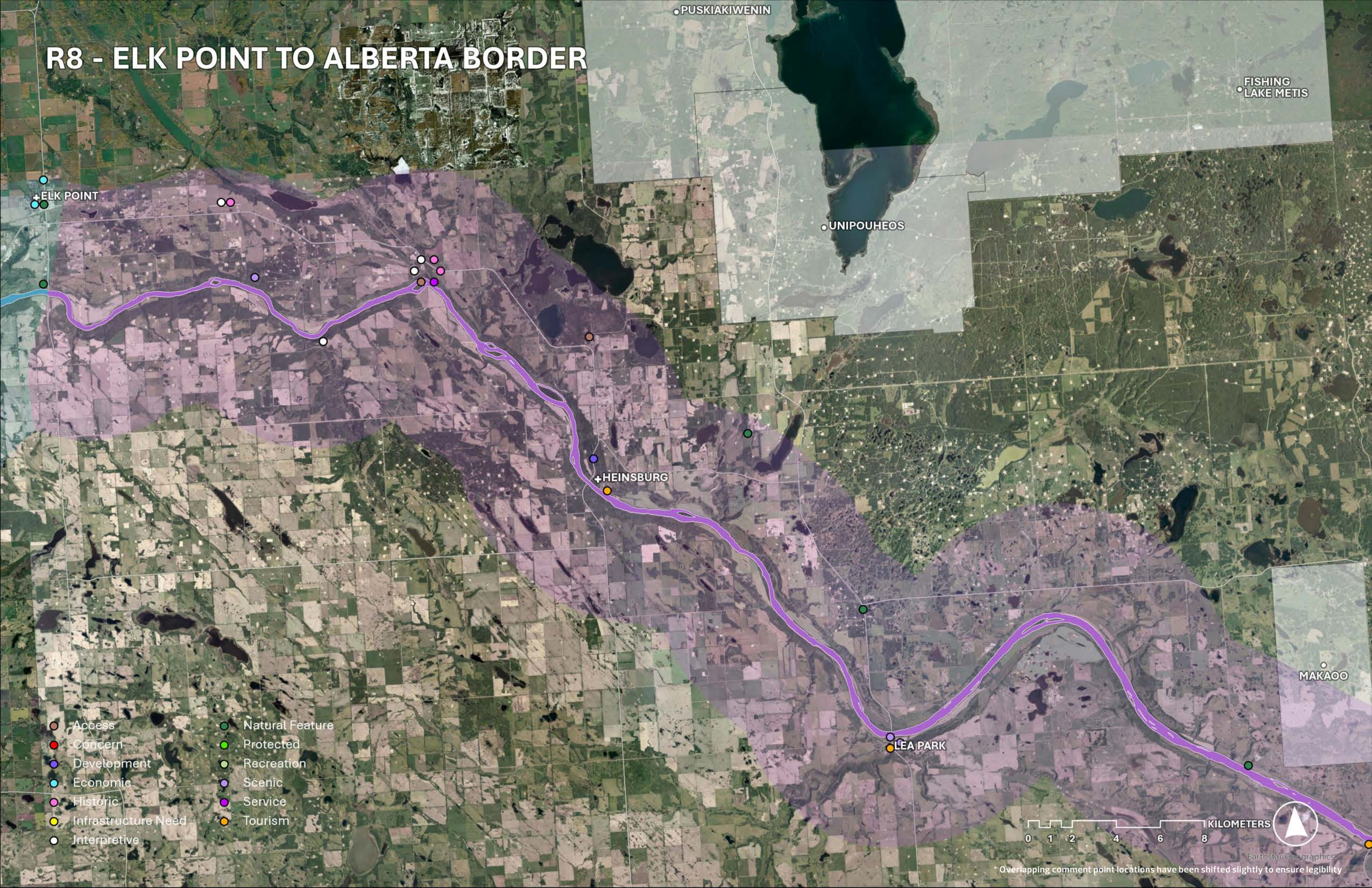
My story of the river and the surrounding lands in this reach is...

"My paternal Grandmother's family was Métis – her maiden name was Coutu. Her family history was documented by Hector Coutu of Two Hills in 1980. My 4X Great Grandmother, Marie Ann Gabourey Lagimodiere, had the first 'European' child in Fort Edmonton. They then moved to MB to be founders of the Red River Settlement – there she became the grandmother to Louis Riel. My family goes back generations along the N.Sask River, and then subsequently the Carlton Trail. These pathways were how my kinfolk traveled, earned their living, and where they settled. I did not learn I was Métis until very recently – it was a secret kept by our parent's generation, who were able to pass for being Caucasian, and did not want to suffer the discrimination that followed the Northwest Resistance. In the early 1950's they moved to Vancouver and started a new life. I would like to contribute to bringing back the recognition they deserve, including their valuable service in opening up the prairies to trade and prosperity. I chose Reach 8 because it should also align with the Carlton Trail and because the Métis history referenced in its overview is connected to my family history."

Comment Classification Summary



R8 - ELK POINT TO ALBERTA BORDER



- Access
- Concern
- Development
- Economic
- Historic
- Infrastructure Need
- Interpretive
- Natural Feature
- Protected
- Recreation
- Scenic
- Service
- Tourism

0 1 2 4 6 8 KILOMETERS



Earthstar Geographics
* Overlapping comment point locations have been shifted slightly to ensure legibility