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FOSTERING EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING FOR PROTECTED AREAS THROUGH THE ALBERTA PARKS SOCIAL SCIENCE WORKING GROUP

ABSTRACT

Since 2012, the Alberta Parks division in the Province of Alberta, Canada has been engaged in a process of building scientific, research, and evidence-informed capacity and practices across the parks system. Following a series of priority-setting workshops and agreements with the research, Parks management, and local communities, Alberta Parks has adopted a working group approach and subsequent framework, to support the research and decision-making goals of parks and protected areas management, and the research communities. This Social Science Framework is an innovative way to support evidence-informed decision-making in the public sphere by explicitly linking data-specific needs (benchmark data in social, natural, and applied sciences) with both established and emerging policy and research priorities. It is also a way to situate those needs within a broader goal of inter-organizational collaboration. This paper presents the background and developmental context to the framework, and its structure and desired functionality. The paper concludes with an assessment of the anticipated benefits and potential liabilities of this direction for linking academic and policy agents and organizations in a more formalized structure for environmental policy.

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