**Decision Support Tool – Screening Criteria**

All criteria in Tables 1 and 2 of the Decision Support Tool are intended to help practitioners determine whether an area meets the Pan-Canadian standards and is therefore eligible to be reported as a Protected Area or an “Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measure" (OECM) under the pan-Canadian standards. Criteria in Table 1 apply similarly to both Protected Areas and OECMs. Criteria in Table 2 help to both define and distinguish between Protected Areas and OECMs. All criteria in Table 2 must be met at the PA level for an area to be reported as protected, or at the OECM level or combination of OECM and PA levels for an area to be reported as an OECM. **This template is intended to be used in conjunction with the decision support tool and detailed interpretation guide.**

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| **BASIC INFORMATION** |
| **Name of Site** | **Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai'pi** |
| **Designation** | Provincial Park, National Historic Site, World Heritage Site |
| **Province/Territory** | Alberta |
| **Year of Establishment / Securement** | 1957 |
| **Area (ha)** | 2,689 ha |
| **Management Authority** | Government of Alberta, Department of Environment and Parks, Parks Division |
| **Explanation of Management Authority** *(optional)* |  |
| **Governance Type *(CPCAD type*)** | Government - subnational |
| **Legal Basis / mechanism(s)** | *Provincial Parks Act* |
| **Explanation of legal basis / mechanism(s)** *(optional)* |  |
| **Summary of Essential / Relevant natural, social and cultural values** | Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai’pi Provincial Park was established to protect the native prairie ecosystem, geodiversity and the unique and special cultural landscape and features found in this site (internationally significant rock art and culturally significant landforms). The protection of the cultural landscape of this site is intrinsically linked to and reliant on the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity. Also a National Historic Site, the park is renowned for its spectacular prairie and badlands landscapes with sandstone hoodoos, cliffs and coulees, a myriad of unique wildlife and plant species, and a significant abundance of aboriginal rock art. Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai’pi is the most sacred of places for the Blackfoot, and is a spiritual site for many other First Nations and non-aboriginal people. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage Site list in 2019.  |

| **TABLE 1: STANDARDS COMMON TO PROTECTED AREAS AND OECMS** |
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| **CRITERIA:** | **INTENDED EFFECT OF THE CRITERION** | **SCREENING CHOICE** | **EVIDENCE-BASED RATIONALE Rationale/evaluation of how area meets or does not meet the intended effect of the criterion** | **MEETS INTENDED EFFECT?** |
| **GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE** | Demarcates the area to facilitate the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. | A. The geographical space has clearly defined and agreed-upon borders. | The boundary of the park is clearly defined by a legal land description included in the Order-in-Council that establishes the park under the *Provincial Parks Act*.  | Yes |
| **EFFECTIVE MEANS – 1** | Activities incompatible with the in-situ conservation of biodiversity do not occur and compatible activities are effectively managed. | B. The mechanism(s) provide(s) the ability to prevent, control and/or manage activities within the area such that the in-situ conservation of biodiversity can be achieved. | The *Provincial Parks Act* has the power and breadth to control all activities within the Provincial Park that are likely to have an impact on biodiversity with the exception of subsurface mineral rights in Provincial Parks, the sale of which is controlled by Alberta Energy. However, a province-wide policy (Information Letter 2003-25) formalizes the intent to prohibit subsurface development in all provincial parks and binds all relevant authorities on this matter. The information letter dictates that any *new* subsurface tenure for oil and gas under the park must be sold with a “no surface access” addendum (legal contract), and precludes coal and other mineral extraction in provincial parks. The intent of this policy instrument is to prevent impacts to the surface and biotic zone by prohibiting access to the surface within the park. Although the Information Letter is at a policy level, the removal or rescinding of the policy would likely have significant legal consequences and is unlikely to ever be rescinded unless the same intent is embedded in new park legislation.There is a small area of the park underlain by privately owned mineral rights that pre-dates the park establishment and would have guaranteed surface access as per the information letter noted above. However, the park has been managed effectively to exclude these activities and there has been no subsurface resource development anywhere in the park since 1957. No development or request for development has ever taken place related to these leases and would unlikely be successful regardless based on strong restrictions related to the archeological and historic resources in the site. | Yes |
| **EFFECTIVE MEANS – 2** | A. The mechanism(s) compel(s) the authority(ies) to prohibit activities that are incompatible with the in-situ conservation of biodiversity.  | The *Provincial Parks Act* in combination with the effective policy instrument that eliminates surface access to subsurface resources noted above compels the prohibition of activities that are incompatible with the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. Restrictions in Provincial Parks laid out under the *Provincial Parks Act* do not compel the prohibition of subsurface mineral extraction. However, the Act works in combination with the effective policy instrument noted above (Information Letter 2003-25) that applies to all Provincial Parks, extinguishing rights to coal and other hard rock minerals, and prohibiting surface access to new subsurface oil and gas tenure sold after the park’s establishment. Together, these mechanisms compel the prohibition of activities incompatible with the conservation objectives of the site. There has been no subsurface resource development in the park since its establishment in 1957.  | Yes |
| **LONG TERM** | The area is permanently protected or conserved and not easily reversed. | A. The mechanism(s) is/are intended to be in effect for the long term and not easily reversed. | Provincial Parks are intended to be in place in perpetuity as per their purpose stated in the legislation: to be maintained to ensure their lasting protection for the benefit of present and future generations.The Provincial Park designation can only be removed with great difficulty by rescinding the Order-in-Council, which requires cabinet approval as well as public consultation, which is a policy commitment. | Yes |
| **TIMING** | Biodiversity is protected or conserved year-round. | A. The mechanism(s) is/are in effect year-round | The Provincial Park designation is in effect year round. | Yes |

| **TABLE 2: STANDARDS THAT FURTHER DEFINE AND DISTINGUISH BETWEEN PROTECTED AREAS AND OECMS** |
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| **CRITERIA:** | **INTENDED EFFECT OF THE CRITERION** | **SCREENING CHOICE** | **EVIDENCE-BASED RATIONALE:****Rationale/evaluation of how area meets or does not meet the intended effect of the criterion** | **OUTCOME** |
| **SCOPE OF OBJECTIVES** | Objectives have sufficient scope to result in the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. | A. The objectives are for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity as a whole, or for indigenous values accomplished through the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. | The scope of the conservation objectives for Writing-on-Stone are for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity and the protection of the significant cultural landscape that is intrinsically linked to and reliant on the conservation of biodiversity and geodiversity. Writing-on-Stone was established to protect the representative grassland ecosystems, rare habitats and sensitive species of this site and to protect the cultural values, internationally significant rock art and historical resources. Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai’pi is the most sacred of places for the Blackfoot, and is a spiritual site for many other First Nations and non-indigenous people. The conservation and protection objectives are set out in both the management plan, and more broadly in the purpose of the Provincial Parks class set out in legislation.  | Yes - PA |
| **PRIMACY OF OBJECTIVES** | Objectives are such that they result in the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. | A. Conservation objectives are stated as primary and overriding of other objectives. | Conservation of biodiversity is explicitly stated as one of the objectives of a Provincial Park class in legislation, and is identified as being the primary objective of this site within the approved Management Plan (along with conservation of associated cultural values). | Yes - PA |
| **GOVERNING AUTHORITIES** | The in-situ conservation of biodiversity is not jeopardized by relevant governing authorities. | A. All relevant governing authorities acknowledge and abide by the conservation objectives of the area.  | Although oil and gas tenure can be sold under the park, they are all sold with no surface access addendum (legal contract). This is governed by a province-wide policy, the intent of which is to ensure protection of the biotic zone within the park, and is binding on all authorities. | Yes - PA |
| **BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION OUTCOMES** | Biodiversity is conserved in-situ. | B. The area is being managed with the intent of, and is likely achieving, the conservation objectives. | Management is clearly intended to achieve biodiversity as set out in the legislation and management plan. Additionally, there is a selective 5 year monitoring plan in place, in which riparian health, range health and various species assessments have been conducted, although monitoring is not comprehensive. Threats to the conservation values of this site such as invasive species have been identified as a potential concern for the site’s long term ecological health. However, evidence from monitoring and field assessments, in combination with the fact that much of the site has limited public access, indicates that biodiversity outcomes are likely to prevail. Additionally, because of the provincial and global significance of the site, it receives good management attention. Although that may be of limited effect, it is likely to have a positive influence on ensuring the values of the site including ecological health are maintained.  | Yes - PA |

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| **SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT**  |
| **OUTCOME / EVALUATION** | **Screening Outcome:** Protected Area (meets all criteria) Is this an Interim Target 1 area: Choose an item.Is this a candidate Target 1 area: Choose an item.**Currently reported to CPCAD/CARTS?** Yes, as Protected Area**Total Area (ha) to be reported to CPCAD/CARTS:** 2,689 ha |
| Identify deficiencies that could be overcome in order to report as PA or OECM | The long term nature of no development occurring or even being proposed on privately-owned mineral rights indicates that it is unlikely that they will ever be developed. However, ideally, either access would be prohibited or ownership of the privately-owned mineral rights would be purchased under Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. Amendments to provincial parks legislation to Include a legal restriction or prohibition on any surface access for new subsurface resources would further increase the certainty or protection from subsurface.  |
| Lead evaluator / assessor | Originally evaluated and published as a CCEA case study by Heather Lazaruk, 2017. Transferred to this current format by Abby Menendez (ECCC) 2020. |
| Communications / Engagement | *Names of governing authorities and others consulted, including names and positions of contact people and dates*Travis Sjovold, Area Manager, reviewed and approved for publication 2017Aaron Domes, Site Manager, reviewed 2017 |
| Approvals  | *Names of governing authorities (including landowners, right holders and the responsible jurisdiction) that have approved the content and results of this screening as being accurate and complete to the best of their knowledge and agree to reporting of data.*Peter Swain, Area Director, approved for publication 2017Tracy Draper, Parks – Parks Land Management Branch Director – reviewed and approved for publication 2017, 2020Brenden Hemens – Alberta Environment and Parks Director (Pathway jurisdictional representative), approved for publication 2020 |

Tags: Alberta, AB, Provincial, Protected Area, PA, IUCN II, National Park, Prairie, Badlands, National Historic Site, World Heritage Site, 2020.