

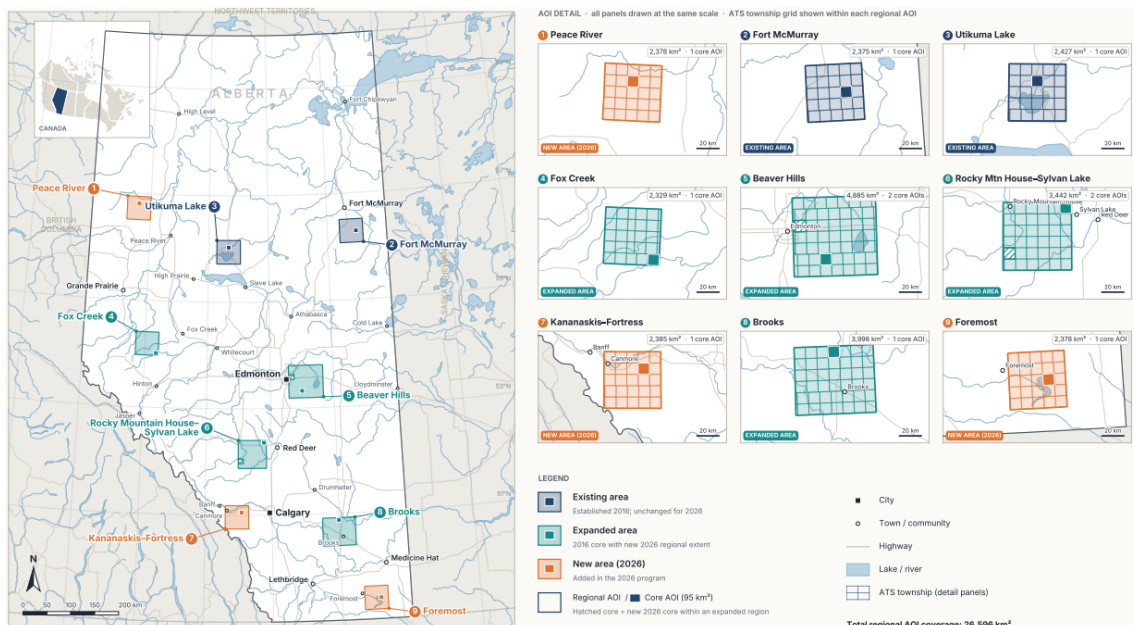
Nine Open Data Areas are confirmed

October 28, 2026

Alberta Data Partnerships is pleased to confirm the final geographic footprint of the modernized Open Data Areas Alberta program. Following stakeholder sessions in July and review with the program's technical and advisory group, nine Open Data Areas have been confirmed: six existing areas, three of which have been expanded, and three new areas selected through stakeholder input. Together they span approximately 25,000 km² and 308 townships.

The nine areas were chosen because each brings together a distinct combination of industry activity, research interest and ecological significance. Every area contains energy infrastructure (wells, pipelines, transmission lines, etc.) and several also host long-running research programs whose field measurements are the kind of ground truth that complements the no-cost EO data and analytics that will be available.

Each Open Data Area is actually two or more areas. The large area, typically 2,300 to 4,900 km², is the footprint for satellite imagery, elevation models and provincial datasets that can be acquired economically over wide extents. Nested inside each are one or more 10 km × 10 km blocks reserved for high-density data, such as LiDAR, aerial orthophotography and drone surveys, where cost per square kilometre is high and the value lies in depth rather than breadth. Beaver Hills and Rocky Mountain House–Sylvan Lake each contain two small blocks and the eleven small areas blocks together cover about 1,050 km².



Fort McMurray (2,375 km²)

Forest, lakes and wetlands in a growing municipality with in situ oil sands operations, pipelines, transmission corridors and forestry operations. The area overlaps a portion of the 2016 Horse River Fire along with project areas for several ongoing or completed research projects. Projects include the Boreal Ecosystem Recovery and Assessment (BERA) Project, a University of Calgary-led project that uses drone and airborne LiDAR to map and monitor seismic-line recovery. The Stony 800 project under fRI Research's Healthy Landscapes Program which focused on restoring natural landscape patterns over existing disturbance and the Oil Sands Monitoring Program's wetland monitoring network.

Utikuma Lake (2,427 km²)

Boreal forest, lakes and caribou habitat overlaid with petroleum, natural gas and forestry. The area overlaps Utikuma Region Study Area (URSA), that has supported research initiatives such as the Hydrology, Ecology and Disturbance (HEAD) program led through the University of Alberta and supported by research organization like fRI. HEAD was a large-scale study of how water connectivity is affected by natural and human disturbances. This area overlaps a portion of the 2011 Utikuma Complex fire that burned north of Utikuma Lake.

Peace River (new, 2,378 km²)

Agricultural land, forestry, energy development and caribou range on the northern boreal margin. The area takes in the Clear Hills Upland and is home to the University of Alberta's EMEND project (Ecosystem Management Emulating Natural Disturbance), a large-scale, long-term forest science experiment on variable retention harvesting experiments. Since 1998, federal and provincial agencies such as Canadian Forest Service, post-secondary institutions like NAIT and the UofA, have collaborated with forest companies such as Canfor and Mercer Peace River have used EMEND to study how retaining forest structure at harvest affects biodiversity, carbon, soils and forest regeneration.

Fox Creek (2,329 km²)

Forest and water systems in the Little Smoky caribou range located in one of the most heavily disturbed ranges in the province. It is a focus for subregional planning and cumulative effects management, including legacy seismic-line restoration under the Caribou Habitat Recovery Program and Forest Research Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA). fRI's Research team leads several caribou wildlife and habitat disturbance research initiatives within this area.

Beaver Hills (expanded to 4,885 km²)

A unique area covering the Beaver Hills which was designated as a biosphere by UNESCO in 2016, Elk Island National Park, the University of Alberta's Ministik Field Station, and is home to one of the most active citizen-science communities in Alberta. This area includes east Edmonton, several communities in Strathcona County, , and a mix of aggregate operations, landfills, transmission lines, pipelines, and industrial facilities located in Alberta's "Industrial Heartland".

Rocky Mountain House–Sylvan Lake (expanded to 3,442 km²)

Agriculture, forest and water resources alongside municipal expansion, energy, forestry and rural infrastructure. Sylvan Lake, one of central Alberta's busiest recreational lakes, is in the area served as one of the pilot lakes to evaluate the use of satellite imagery for monitoring algae blooms in lakes, led by the University of Alberta. This project lead to the development of the Algal Bloom Tracker, The expanded area takes in the Medicine River watershed where volunteer monitoring of river water quality and groundwater levels is ongoing. It also falls within the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance's riparian mapping program.

Kananaskis–Fortress (new, 2,385 km²)

The upper Bow River watershed, mountain systems, forest and lands under the *All Season Resorts Act* this area includes a mix of energy, forestry and agriculture at its margins. The area contains four research basins of the Canadian Rockies Hydrological Observatory, part of the Global Water Futures Observatories (GWFO) network led by the University of Saskatchewan with twelve partner universities. The Fortress Mountain Research Basin and Snow Laboratory produces drone-based LiDAR surveys of snow depth that are converted into maps for the whole basin. The Coldwater Laboratory, founded in 2009 at the University of Calgary's Barrier Lake Field Station coordinates the network and much of the data is published in near real time through GWFO's open-access WaterNet data centre.

Brooks (expanded to 3,998 km²)

Located in the Bow River watershed and overlapping the Eastern Irrigation District, the area includes grasslands, cultivated lands and a mix of pipelines, petroleum and natural gas, alongside emerging renewable energy development. The area is centred on the City of Brooks and Lake Newell. The area includes the Crop Diversification Centre South, a hub for irrigated and dryland crop research, and Carbon Management Canada's field research station west of Lake Newell, a test site for carbon capture and storage monitoring

technologies. The University of Alberta's Mattheis Research Ranch, home to long-term rangeland, grazing and carbon research, is located in the northern part of the area.

Foremost (new, 2,378 km²)

Native grassland alongside dryland agriculture, petroleum and natural gas, renewable energy and municipal lands and a corner of the St. Mary River Irrigation District at the Forty Mile Reservoir. The area lies within the range of the greater sage-grouse, protected under a federal Emergency Protection Order, and overlaps a portion of the Foremost UAS Test Range. The Test Range includes 2,400 km² of restricted airspace approved by Transport Canada for beyond-visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) drone research and development providing a unique opportunity to integrate drone, aerial and satellite observations over the same ground with land use and ownership information as a contextual layer.

What happens next

With boundaries confirmed, baseline data acquisition and integration are underway across all nine areas. In parallel, Amii is supporting Altalis and ADP in the development of the Registered Interests on Titled Lands (RITL) prototype, which will link environmental observations to legal land interests within each area.

Research groups, agencies and companies working in any of the nine areas are invited to get in touch.

The ODAA Modernization program is delivered by Alberta Data Partnerships with the support of Alberta Innovates.

Questions about the areas or the program can be directed to erik@abdatapartnerships.ca.