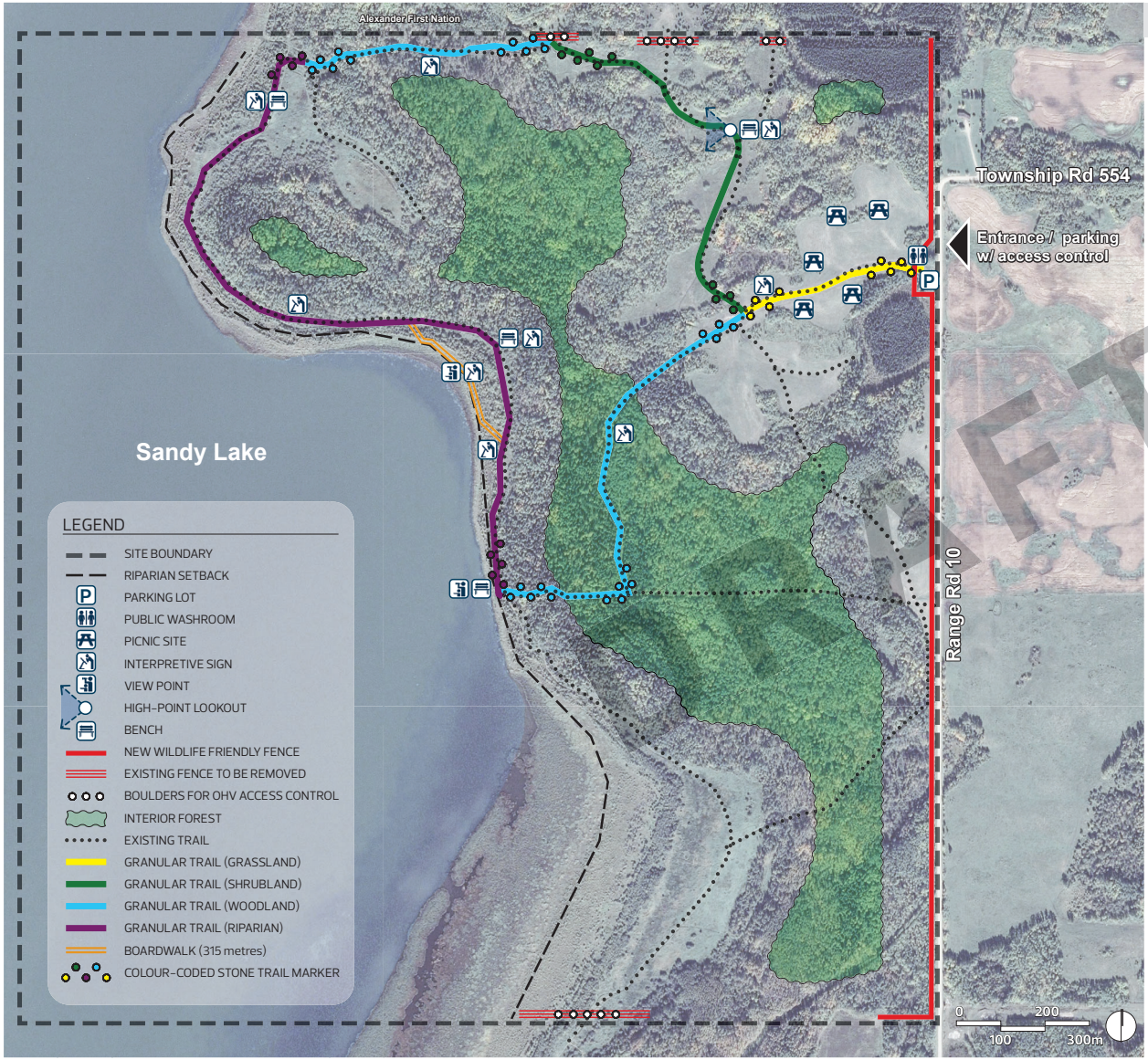

CONCEPT PLAN – A CONSERVATION APPROACH

The Sandy Lake Wilderness Area (SLWA) holds potential as both a recreational destination and a preserved natural environment. However, findings from the ***SLWA What We Heard Report*** (September 2021) highlighted over 123 public comments on the negative impacts of human activity on the area, emphasizing environmental consequences and effects on neighbouring communities.

In response, the concept plan presents a balanced approach to foster responsible development that accommodates human use while prioritizing ecological sustainability. This approach aims to conserve SLWA's natural features—including vegetation, wildlife habitats, hydrology, and water resources—by defining development boundaries and outlining protection measures for sensitive areas to minimize human impact.

Main Features:

1. **Reclaim and enhance the site's natural landscape features.**
2. **Emphasize extensive, passive recreational activities centered on trail experiences.**
3. **Utilize existing trails with minor improvements to address tread irregularities and safety concerns.**
4. **Minimize capital, operational, and maintenance funding requirements.**

Site Program & Amenity Recommendations:

1. **Environmentally-Compatible Passive Uses:** Design the site to encourage passive recreational activities that align with the conservation goals of an Environmentally Significant Area. Such uses should focus on minimizing human impact, fostering visitor appreciation for the natural landscape, and supporting habitat conservation efforts.
2. **Wildlife Friendly Fencing:** Redesign boundary edges to manage the area effectively and control OHV access while supporting local wildlife migration:
   - **North and South Boundaries:** Remove the existing barbed wire fencing to facilitate wildlife movement. Place boulders approximately 1.5 to 2 meters apart to restrict OHV access while keeping the area open for animals.
   - **East Boundary:** Remove the existing barbed wire fence along Range Road 10. Replace it with wildlife friendly fencing that provides boundary management and OHV control while allowing for safe wildlife passage.
3. **Designated Parking Area:** Restrict vehicle access into natural zones by establishing a designated parking area. This arrangement will reduce habitat disruption and protect wildlife from vehicular disturbances, creating a safer, more protected wilderness environment.
4. **Colour-Coded Trail Markers:** Install stone trail markers with a color-coded system to guide visitors while blending seamlessly with the landscape.
5. **Picnic and Gathering Areas with Fire Boxes:** Create designated picnic sites that include fire boxes to allow for safe, controlled fire use. These areas should be situated in open spaces that limit disturbance to the surrounding habitats, giving visitors a welcoming space to enjoy the outdoors responsibly.
6. **Resting Areas with Benches and Animal Resistant Waste Receptacles:** Provide resting points with comfortable benches and animal resistant waste bins along the trails. This will encourage responsible waste disposal while giving visitors spaces to pause and enjoy the natural surroundings.
7. **Boardwalk with View Points:** Install boardwalks at select, sensitive locations to protect the ground while allowing visitors to experience and observe the ecosystem. Include small, thoughtfully-placed view points to provide unobstructed views of the area.
8. **High Point Viewing Area of Sandy Lake:** Develop a high-point lookout with unobstructed views of Sandy Lake, allowing visitors to experience panoramic landscapes without entering sensitive areas.
9. **Educational and Interpretive Signage:** Implement an educational and culturally-informed signage program to deepen visitor engagement and awareness. This includes:
   - **Cultural and Historical Signage:** Place interpretive signs at key seating areas to inform visitors about the area's rich cultural heritage. Signs can include names of plants, animals, and places in Cree.
   - **Ethnobotanical Signage:** Integrate signs along trails identifying significant native plants like saskatoon, currants, chokecherries, and mint, underscoring the ecological and cultural importance of these species.

CONCEPT PLAN – DRAFT

SANDY LAKE WILDERNESS AREA
OCTOBER 2024

PREPARED FOR: Sturgeon County

PREPARED BY: Spencer Environmental Management Services Ltd. | Al-Terra