

CASTLE WILDERNESS NEWS

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The Castle Special Place Working Group

by Dianne Pachal, Director

The Castle Special Place Citizens' Initiative is a widely representative initiative that has developed a set of principles for working together and to guide its selection of current types of legislated protected areas and parks to recommend to Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation for the Castle Special Place. (See castlespecialplace.ca for the principles.) This process started a couple of steps back from the Andy Russell-I'tai sah kòp Parks Initiative, which recommended a Wildland Park and Provincial Park in 2005. The Working Group of the initiative also opens the information part of its meetings to the general public. These are topics focused on information that will help its deliberations on what types of protected areas to recommend.

Three Working Group representatives met recently with MLA Evan Berger, who is not only the local MLA, but is also parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development and a lead official for the Land-Use Framework and the South Saskatchewan land-use planning to get underway shortly.

A large Working Group delegation (included representatives from the Crowsnest Pass, Royal Dutch Shell, Sierra Club, CCWC, organizations of the Piikani, and landowner, conservation, and hunting groups), met in Edmonton in February with a group of senior staff (Assistant Deputy Ministers and Directors) from Tourism, Parks & Recreation (TP&R), Energy, Environment, Aboriginal Relations, Sustainable Resource Development (SRD, Lands Division and Land-Use Secretariat).

The key question asked by the Working Group was "do you foresee any barriers to official consideration by your Department of the conceptual proposal that will be coming forward from the citizens' initiative?" None of the departments identified any barriers. Energy thanked the group for providing some key documents. SRD asked the initiative to consider requesting the Castle Special Place go through land-use planning instead of the protected areas process. Representatives emphasized that the government already made the key land-use decision by designating the Castle Special Place as a protected area. The initiative's asking

for implementation of that decision through legislation, instead of the Forest Act regulation which has not worked, largely because the Act is not protected areas legislation. The initiative isn't asking for the Castle to go through land-use planning all over again to determine whether or not it should be a protected area. That decision was made by the Alberta Government following land-use planning, interdepartmental reviews and public consultation. Now is the time to implement that decision through the current protected areas legislation, as has been done for the other 80 Special Places.

The Working Group indicated it expects the conceptual proposal to be completed and in the departments' hands before this summer. TP&R asked all the departments there if they or SRD should be the "one window" for communications and deliberations on the conceptual proposal. The officials agreed that TP&R will be the "one window" for the government and the citizens' initiative. •



The spectacular beauty of the Castle. Spring's coming soon. Photo by James Tweedie.

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Upcoming Meeting

Members are welcome at directors meetings.
 Contact the office to be put on the notification list.
 AGM May 23, 2009

Membership

Note the CanadaHelps button on the website for donations by credit card—and thanks to those who have used it already!

Newsletter

Editor: Judy Huntley.
 This newsletter welcomes comments and/or submissions from members and others. Please send submissions by mail or e-mail to the office. Please check with the office for submission deadlines.

The opinions, evaluations, claims and assertions contained in articles appearing in the Castle Wilderness News are the responsibility of their authors, and may not reflect the policies of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. The office takes responsibility for articles, notices, etc., for which an author is not identified.

Production: Murray Coppold. Thanks to Rosemary Coppold, who addresses, stamps, stuffs and mails the newsletter to you.

Donations to CCWC are tax creditable and greatly appreciated. Alberta's new Community Spirit Program means that both you and CCWC will benefit more from your contributions.



Coalition News

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

Annual General Meeting—save the date!

May 23, 2009—CCWC's 20th anniversary. Contact the office if you want to help organize either the AGM or an anniversary celebration later in the season.

Request for email addresses

Please, if you have changed your address, are willing to get your newsletter electronically, or haven't been getting our occasional email messages, send us your e-address and check that your spam filter doesn't prevent CCWC mail from getting through.

T-shirts and the Hiking Guide

T-shirts and the hiking guide are available again. Unfortunately the posters got water damaged in a bizarre accident. Some are only slightly damaged if you want them. We'll reprint them as soon as possible.

Follow-up on poaching of bighorn sheep

One of last winter's nastiest events in the area was the slaughter of rams and ewes in the front range canyons. The ewes were just left to rot; the heads and capes were taken from the large rams. Now, two people have been charged, though not yet convicted. Thanks to everyone who worked on this. Your eyes in the hills, and your willingness to report, are really important. •



Saxifrage blooming after the Lost Creek fire. Photo by James Tweedie.



Thanks

All of us at CCWC warmly thank our new and old volunteers, our contributors of time, gear, skills, and money, and our funders in the past year: **Fanwood and Wilburforce Foundations, The LaSalle Adams Fund, World Wildlife Fund, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Alberta Stewardship Network, Alberta Ecotrust Foundation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Alberta Conservation Association, and the Alpine Club of Canada.** Many, many thanks to you all!



Alberta's Plan for Parks

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

Clips from the News Release

The province's protected area groups strongly support the Alberta Government's resolve to write and implement a new and much-needed parks policy in time for regional land-use planning. However, they are sounding the alarm because the current draft of [Alberta's Plan for Parks](#) does not sufficiently address what the majority of Albertans say they want for parks.

The 2008 Survey of Albertan's Priorities for Provincial Parks, conducted by the Government to inform the Plan for Parks, makes this summary: "Albertans feel the top priority for Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation should be to set aside more land and leaving it in an undisturbed state." Caucus members felt that the draft Plan for Parks dilutes the protection mandate, is ominously vague about setting aside more land, and fails to give the Ministry the authority to create new parks.

Naturalist clubs, protected area stewards and conservation groups are asking Albertans to contact their MLAs and enlist their support in ensuring these core deficiencies are addressed

before the 10-year Plan for Parks is finalized. Dianne Pachal says "it's critical Albertans actually contact their MLAs directly, and not just rely on surveys and stakeholder consultations to get their message through."

See the whole PR at ccwc.ab.ca/news_press.php

Addresses

Premier Ed Stelmach, Room 307, Legislature Building, 10800 – 97 Ave. Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

To email: <http://www.premier.alberta.ca/contact/index.cfm>

Alberta residents, find your MLA's name & address at assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=mla_home

Send a copy of your letter to:

Honourable Cindy Ady, Tourism, Parks & Recreation Minister, 229 Legislature Building, Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6.

email: cindy.ady@gov.ab.ca

An example of a member's (Tim Grier) letter. Please make yours personal, and send CCWC a copy.

Hon. Ed Stelmach,

I wish to express my concern that the draft Alberta's Plan for Parks does not take into account Albertans' response to the Government's recently released Survey of Albertans' Priorities for Provincial Parks. I took the time to respond to that survey and I would hope that my input was valuable to you. Preservation of our natural heritage should be a lead priority of a Parks plan and your parks department should have a leadership role in establishing new protected areas and parks.

Alberta is the only place on the continent where the expanse of the Boreal, the continental backbone of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains meet, making it one of the most biologically diverse regions. But, it is an impoverished one when it comes to having adequate designated protected areas and parks to sustain that natural environment.

Thank you for considering my views.

Respectfully,
Your Name



Species at Risk

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

Alberta's newly published Strategy for the Management of Species at Risk (2009–2014), provides direction and identifies priorities for the next five years. The strategy looks at each stage of provincial Species at Risk programming, including:

- how to put recovery actions into effect
- how to prevent species from becoming endangered, and
- how to address conservation and stewardship programs.

CCWC is in touch with the Species At Risk folks, and will add as much SAR observation and reporting to our summer program as we can. If you are a Steward, a hike leader, or an occasional hiker, keep this in mind. It should be really interesting. •



Executive Director's Report

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

The articles in this newsletter give you a sense of what CCWC has been up to: lots. There have also been a great many interesting and valuable public events, such as "Holding the Reins", the Oldman Watershed Council's annual showcase of Landowners' and Watershed groups and what they do. CCWC had a display and spoke briefly, and the Castle Special Place group spoke also. The array of good ideas and real improvements throughout the watershed—and people's ability to speak about it—was just fantastic.

We are also hoping to do a small speaker series in the spring, but there so many events in town this may not happen. The other primary winter work is the planning for next summer tasks, and finding enough funds to keep CCWC working.

Summer plans

Both Wendy and Bree hope to be back with us this year. We intend to carry on with observation, stewardship, reporting, weed and trash removal, gathering of more volunteers, and learning more skills. We will also offer many hikes!

Additions to CCWC's recreation events

Wendy Ryan has some great suggestions for different summer outings. Most of our hikes are too strenuous for some of our members, so Wendy is planning some gentler options for the 2009 schedule. Look for the hiking schedule in the May newsletter, and on the website before that. Contact the office if you have a hike you'd like to lead.

Wendy has also been talking with CCWC fisherfolk and folks at Trout Unlimited about a joint project with the Crowsnest Conservation Society, TU and the CCWC called 'Learning and Loving Fly Fishing', including a day on the Castle and one on the Crowsnest.



EUB denies Shell's Mount Backus application

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

On December 16, 2008, the EUB denied Shell's request for an level 3 critical-sour exploratory well, pipelines, a compressor, and a single-well gas battery at and near Mt Backus, about 6 km southwest of Beaver Mines. A pipeline that Shell wanted to use in testing the new well had burst only a month after the hearing. Since then, the EUB (Energy and Utilities Board) has divided in two, and the ERCB (Energy Resources Conservation Board) will now be in charge. The Board denied the applications without prejudice for Shell to reapply in the future to the ERCB.

Shell has scheduled an open house about the pipeline leak, and is just starting another round of consultations on the Mt Backus (Waterton 68) proposal, which for some reason

CCWC outreach

CCWC has been working hard through the fall and winter with many people and groups in the province (and beyond) to ensure protection for the Castle Wilderness.

The Andy Russell – I'tai Sah Kòp Park proposal is a straightforward "proposed Wildland and Provincial Park for Southwest Alberta" which has been submitted to the appropriate authorities.

The Castle Wilderness is a very important part of SW Alberta, which is part of the second region to be worked on as part of the Land Use Framework. CCWC members have worked on both LUF Working Groups and the NGO working group. For more information on the program, see (landuse.alberta.ca/).

Steve Kennett of the Pembina Institute has written a thorough and thoughtful article setting out recommendations for the legal details needed to make the LUF work. See Canadian Institute of Resources Law, or drop me a line and I'll send you a copy.

CCWC has worked hard on the Parks Caucus of the Alberta Environmental Network, which has been intensely involved in the development of Alberta's new Plan for Parks. They have recently circulated a press release. A suggested letter is on page 3. Please look at it, write the appropriate people, and send us a copy. •

seems to have a much smaller Emergency Planning Zone now than it had in round 1. There are also plans for a Castle River development, northwest of Beaver Mines. Beaver Mines is in the EPZ for that one.

Shell has gathered information about the November pipeline leak. There will not be a public inquiry, but only an open house, held on February 26 at the Pincher Creek Community Hall, which provided information on the Screwdriver Creek pipeline failure, Shell's start-up plans for the North Waterton Field, and other topics. Shell, Acuren Materials and Testing, Russell NDE Systems Inc. and the ERCB were present. •