



Shell No Longer Opposes the Park

by James Tweedie, Conservation Director

In September and October, a hearing was held in the Pincher Creek Community Hall as an opportunity for the public to provide input to the Energy and Utilities Board on Shell's proposal to drill an exploratory well at (and put in a pipeline to) Mt. Backus, west of Beaver Mines.

This was the first time in years that a well proposal on public land was close enough to people's dwellings that a number of people could intervene. Friends of Mt Backus provided an excellent panel of experts as well as a fine panel of local concerned citizens. Mike Sawyer did an excellent job as spokesman for a local intervenor. And CCWC represented various members who were accepted as intervenors but were unable to attend the hearing.

All members should note that this was very important. CCWC is very knowledgeable about the land, land use, and ecology in the Castle Wilderness, as well as the law and policy concerning land use. We realized that this was an exploratory well, and stated clearly at the preliminary hearing that we therefore intended to speak about the entire prospective field that might result from this well. The Board can only use the information presented in a given hearing in their deliberation, so it is crucial to present all essential information in as compact a manner as possible.

Gordon Petersen, past CCWC president and longtime board member, and his wife Cathy Scrimshaw, knew they would be away at the time of the hearing and therefore informed Shell at the beginning of the public involvement process that they wanted CCWC to speak for them. By the time of the hearing, a number of other members within the Emergency Planning Zone, and others nearby, had written letters of objection and had also asked CCWC to represent them as well.

James Tweedie, Judy Huntley, and Wendy Ryan put in weeks of hard work preparing for and presenting at the hearing. Wendy, in addition, provided lunch to an increasing group of presenters and observers. Their presentations are available on the CCWC website. An important part of James' input was a slide show of the site as it is now, and before and after photos of the Shell sites further north. Many thanks to the Stewards

who provide their reports and photos, and to the Lethbridge Community Foundation for the laptop and projector.

A very important part of Shell's testimony in response to a question from CCWC in cross examination was that Shell no longer opposes the idea of a Park in the Castle. The EUB panel Chair reiterated the question as his first question to Shell. We look forward to working with Shell on the Park planning process. •

Pipeline Break Near Mt Backus

On November 19, less than two miles from the proposed new well, a sour gas pipeline burst. Residents were evacuated; others were told to stay indoors. People from a wide area smelled the gas; several sought medical attention for nausea, dizziness and severe headaches. A few days later, a horse on a nearby property died.

CCWC, along with other concerned people and groups, is asking the EUB to open a comprehensive enquiry into Shell's operations in the Screwdriver Creek area. •



Mt. Backus hike.

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Upcoming Meeting

Members are welcome to attend board meetings.
Contact the office for details.

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.*



Notes of Interest

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

Geotourism map & website

National Geographic now has a department that does “geotourism” mapping. You can check it out at www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable. Their definition of “geotourism (n) is: Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place--its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.” They started with Appalachia, followed by the Northeast Kingdom in Vermont and, most recently, a transboundary map of Sonora-Arizona. A Crown of the Continent map has been in development this year. Its website will provide an excellent link into CCWC’s website, and the launch of the map in the spring will turn much attention to this area, and to the dramatic difference between the land-use of the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana and the public lands in Alberta. We will make good use of this opportunity.

Wider group talks about planning the Park

In late November, Dianne Pachal arranged, and Shell hosted, a meeting of the conservation groups working toward the Andy Russell-I’tai Sah Kòp Park, with the Municipal District and Town of Pincher Creek, Crowsnest, and Waterton Councillors, Shell, and senior Alberta Parks staff, to discuss the next steps in planning the Park.

Support work farther afield

Training Resources for the Environmental Community (TREC) is an organization that puts skills and people together in ways that they might not manage on their own. Over the last number of months they have facilitated meetings of CCWC, CPAWS, Sierra Club, AWA and the Chinook group with people knowledgeable about the current government. We are delighted to know how strong the support for a protected Castle is growing.

Thanks

Thanks to Wilburforce Foundation, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Alberta Ecotrust, ASN Water Stewardship Grants, Y2Y Partners Fund, Lethbridge Community Foundation, Fanwood Foundation, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and our many friends, contributors, and volunteers, for making our work happen. •



Executive Director's Report

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

Greetings from the office which is going to be suddenly much quieter. Wendy Ryan is heading back to her winter work at Castle Mountain Resort, and I have just had a knee replacement, which will mean I'll be unable to get up the Lebel Mansion stairs for a bit. For now, I'll be working from home. Contact by email or phone should work more or less normally.

Wendy has been a wonderful co-worker, and I look forward with great enthusiasm to having her back again in the spring. Thanks, Wendy! I hope it's a gorgeous winter, and that you'll be joining us for more slide shows and cross-country ski tours in the next few months.

On November 7th, Wendy Ryan and Tim Grier gave us an evening of slides of hiking and horse packing through the Castle Wilderness. Wendy will be organizing evenings of slides and stories through the winter. The next will be Wednesday December 5 at 7:00 in the Lebel Mansion.



observers at the Hearing—for their help in getting this wonderful place protected.

Stewardship

This has been a great year for CCWC stewardship. Many volunteers have given their time and provided information. Wendy Ryan has covered a spectacular number of miles and vertical feet on foot and horse, most of them with notebook in hand. CCWC thanks you all, and will have your input posted to the website as soon as we can.

WCWC Calendars

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee publishes an annual Endangered Wilderness calendar. It is beautiful, poignant, riveting, inspiring. August 2008 is the Andy Russell-I'tai Sah Kòp Park. We highly recommend you send these



Stewardship pack trip near Big Sage (left) and near the head of the South Castle (right). Photos by Carita Bergman.

It has been an excellent, if sometimes hectic, summer and fall for CCWC. Unfortunately the desperately dry weather meant a long break in the hiking schedule, but other events—such as the two week EUB hearing—kept us busy. In addition, CCWC president Jillian Lynn Lawson and I participated in one of the working groups of the Alberta Land Use Forum, which we hope will lead to not only better land use planning in the province, but also to a sensible linkage of Land, Air, and Water planning.

A collaborating group of people and organizations in the Pincher Creek and Cardston areas, including the Castle and the Front Range Canyons, is working on a Land Use Study similar to the one done recently for the area north of Highway 3. They need funds to complete their work, and Corb Lund is helping with a fundraiser December 1 in Pincher Creek.

As always, we thank our volunteers—board members, stewards, hike leaders and hikers, as well as the supportive

calendars far and wide. They can be purchased for \$15 at the office (make an appointment, as the office will mostly not be staffed in November and December) or online from www.wildernesscommittee.org.

They have also provided us with their book *Big Trees not Big Stumps* by Paul George—a history of twenty five years of campaigning for wilderness—which can be borrowed from the office. Thanks to WCWC, and to CCWC volunteers Barbara Brownold and Tim Grier for making this happen.

Concerts

Wendy Ryan, Paul Bohnert, Myrna Marty, and Jolaine Kelly worked hard helping Dianne Pachal of the Sierra Club and many volunteers to organize and present the superb Concerts and Auction for the Headwaters. I hope you all

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were able to join us. The music and the energy were superb, and the auction donations were wonderful. Thanks to the musicians, the donors, the volunteers, and the crowd, for two spectacular evenings.

Andy Russell's film *Grizzly Country*, with an introductory interview of Andy by Ian Tyson, is going to be produced on DVD by the Whyte Museum in Banff. These can be ordered from the museum, or from the CCWC office for \$15 (\$20 if you want them shipped).

Postcards, and Contact with Councils

Many hundreds of postcards went to the Premier after the concerts, urging him to start the planning process for the Park. If you missed getting a card, this is a good time to write him and



The CCWC presented its information at the Banff Festival of Mountain Films and Books in November.

the other ministers, and give them another nudge (addresses and info are on the website, www.ccwc.ab.ca). Also, be sure to attend your party's candidates' forums, and ask questions about their support of the Park. If you live in southwest Alberta, it is a good time to phone and ask the Councils in the area to support a Park planning process.

CCWC has asked that Councils put park planning on their agenda for the winter joint meeting, and that they have members of the Drayton Valley Councils speak to them about how their new park came into being. We thank Councils very much for their support.

Meeting with SRD

On November 5th, staff and volunteers met with local Sustainable Resource Management staff in the Crowsnest Pass to report observations made and work done by our Stewards over the summer and fall, and discuss the improvements that can be made and how best to work together. A major problem for SRD staff is a painfully scant budget. CCWC will write the SRD minister about this, and encourages you to do the same.

We are disappointed by the apparent lack of communication between SRD's internal departments (such as the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife, and Public Lands), and hope that this improves soon. •



Above: CCWC Conservation Director James Tweedie spoke to the MD of Pincher Creek about the ongoing Wakaluk proposal.

Below: Vista with Mt Backus in near background by Dawn Hall.

