



Shell Pipeline Break: Public Review Requested

by James Tweedie, Conservation Director

Last fall the CCWC participated in the Energy and Utilities Board Public Hearing into Shell Canada's proposal to drill a natural gas well (with anticipated very high hydrogen sulphide content) on public lands at the head of Screwdriver Creek, below Mount Backus, close to Beaver Mines. That Hearing closed in early October 2007, with the expectation that a decision by the Board would be made by January of this year.

Within six weeks, on November 19th, there was a serious failure on the nearby Screwdriver Creek pipeline, occasioning the implementation of Shell Canada's Emergency Response Plan (ERP), including notification and in some cases the evacuation of local residents.

Both the problems with Shell's existing pipeline infrastructure and their ERP had been the subject of much debate during the course of the Hearing. Recognizing those concerns, the Board deferred its decision on Shell's facilities applications until a full investigation of the pipeline failure could be made. That report has just been released, exactly a year to the day from the closing of the Hearing in 2007. Anyone interested in seeing the document can obtain it from the Energy Resources Conservation Board (formerly the EUB), from Shell Canada or as a PDF file from the CCWC office.

With the Report's release, the Board asked interveners at the Hearing to provide written submissions in response to its findings. Instead, together with other interveners as well as other local residents who were not part of the Hearing process in 2007 but certainly affected by the pipeline failure, we have requested that the Board convene a public hearing or enquiry that can engage all locally affected residents to discuss the implications that the Report may have relating to the health and safety concerns of living in close proximity to Shell's pipeline infrastructure. Ordinarily each pipeline failure is treated as an isolated event by Shell and the Board, just as each well or pipeline application by the oil and gas sector is typically treated as an isolated application.

The recent pipeline vandalism in north east British Columbia illustrates the vulnerability of any community sharing its environment with this industry. The Board has a clear

responsibility to deal with this matter at the community level. Right now there is a serious credibility gap between the claims made by Shell at past public hearings about the integrity of their pipeline infrastructure and the efficiency of their ERP procedures, even without any vandalism being factored in.

There are broad substantive concerns raised in the Report that need a full public airing and these should not be allowed to be relegated to a mere addendum to the October 2007 public hearing process. •

CMR water request

As we told you last issue, Castle Mountain Resort has applied to divert 30,000 cubic metres of spring runoff water from Haig Creek (Gravenstafel Brook) into a reservoir high in the basin, with the intention of using the water the next winter for snowmaking. CCWC has submitted its concerns, but is not classified as having "directly affected status" in the matter.



The Barbero family climbed Castle Mountain this summer and had a grand day. Photos: Brent Barbero



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Upcoming Meeting

Members are welcome at directors meetings.
Contact the office to be put on the notification list..

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.*



Dave Sheppard Honoured as a Wilderness Defender

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

The Alberta Wilderness Association has recently honoured Dave Sheppard, a founding member, science advisor, restoration advocate, and leading light of CCWC.

AWA's website says:

Dave Sheppard's unwavering commitment to Alberta's wild lands distinguishes him as one of our outstanding Wilderness Defenders. Dave and his wife, Jean, moved to the foothills near Pincher Creek in the late 1970s after teaching biology at the University of Saskatchewan. He soon recognized the ecological importance of the Castle region and worked tirelessly toward its protection. His innate ability to rally a disparate group of people behind a common cause, maintain an even keel when things get rough, and create lasting social bonds among those he meets has left us with a living legacy of environmental stewardship that will echo through the Castle and beyond for decades to come.

Thanks, AWA. We certainly agree! •



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!



Table Mountain and Trail Restoration

by Wendy Ryan

The Piikani have many native spiritual sites in the Castle Wilderness. Table Mountain or Flat Mountain is the most hiked mountain in the Castle Wilderness, due to its easy access from Beaver Mines Lake in the Provincial Recreation Area. Unfortunately some people who climb this mountain vandalise the vision sites and remove prayer flags.

It is a shame that motorbikers fail to respect this mountain and drive on the top along the ridge. They access the top via the horse trail cut back in the early days of the guest ranching heyday, when no one had or imagined ORVs. As a result the mountain is scarred from one end to another and a huge erosion channel has been created—as deep as one metre and up to two metres across—which runs down the mountain for hundreds of metres.

This was the first time I had seen the OHV-caused erosion on the mountain on the east side. I strongly feel that the province needs to look at this mountain and others being abused, along with the native spiritual sites. I have asked ASRD to pencil in the reclamation of this erosion for their Ed Gregor Stewardship day on June 6, 2009. If you are interested in helping out with this project, we would love your help. The Buffalo Runners Society will be volunteering along with the Black Horn Runners.

This last June, we were given permission from ASRD to work on trail reclamation on the hiking trail. CCWC and the volunteers

put up trail markers and added a few new switchbacks, while others stayed on the lower trail, building up and repairing the lost trails in several locations. More work also needs to be done on the upper section with defining the trail. Small steps and a long journey!

A lot of recent off trail hiking is occurring, causing plant disturbances and general erosion on the mountain. Hikers tend to go anywhere they please, shale jumping and direct hiking to the top, not thinking about what damage they may be causing. This area is not protected and maintained by a trail crew as it would be if it was in Waterton, so we as stewards take on the task to the best of our ability. I am very pleased with the efforts and interest with this years trail work.

There are many special features of Table Mountain that can be pointed out along the trail, which are shared on CCWC's scheduled hike. Hiking up one side of the mountain to continue over the top and descend the other side with a car drop is an excellent, beautiful day trip. This can truly be a journey of knowledge, as the mountain offers so much.

It is my hope to complete a hiking brochure for Table Mountain and work closely with the camp director at Camp Impessa. If you would like to help with the brochure or the restoration work, or learn more about Table Mountain, please email me at wendydav@shaw.ca •



Table Mountain scenes: Descent from Upper to Middle Lake; prayer flags, and Jenny and Tim at Upper Ridge Lake camp. Photos by Wendy Ryan.



Executive Director's Report

by Judy Huntley, Executive Director

This summer and fall were so densely packed with work that it's not possible to fit it all into a short newsletter. Wendy and Bree were really spectacular staff people, and we will work hard to find funding to have them both back next year. Various of our staff and volunteers have participated in an array of events which relate to science, management, and community economics of these headwaters. Gord is part of a collaborative group working to define best ways to protect this special place. James is taking the lead for CCWC on the provincial Plan for Parks. Judy is working closely with the Land Use Framework which, along with the Southwest Prototype, will certainly define uses of the Castle. Judy and James attended the Crown of the Continent group gathering in Fernie, where people from Alberta, BC, and Montana continued the collaboration that began with National Geographic's Geotourism map, supporting culturally, historically, and ecologically focused tourism. Judy also attended an excellent science symposium hosted by the Oldman Watershed Council, where scientists took the opportunity to share new information on fire, pollution, and water impoundment and their ecological consequences. Judy and James were very engaged in both the science and the management of the headwaters at a recent conference in Cochrane, and certainly recommend that you have a look at the very good, very current papers at www.ourplaceintheheadwaters.ca. We can only hope that, with all this activity, the Castle Wilderness will soon be protected from destructive impacts, and restoration can be a top priority.

Winter activities

CCWC will host a speaker series later in the winter, with speakers on ecological changes after the Lost Creek Fire, and other relevant topics. We will also gather people to tell their stories of the Castle Wilderness, both this year and as far into the past as people's memories can reach.

Christmas presents!

We at last have a new supply of the wonderful Castle Wilderness t-shirts, as well as a small remaining supply of the dvd of Andy Russell's "Grizzly Country", and a few posters. We have sold all the copies we had of Rob Kershaw's Castle hiking guide, but let us know if you want it and we can get in more.

Volunteers needed

We would still greatly appreciate volunteers to help us keep the website evolving and up to date. •



Wendy's Top Camp Sites of 2008— Where was yours?

by Wendy Ryan

Hi CCWC folks! Here's my list for this year of *Where to Sleep Under the Stars in the Castle Wilderness!* Let us know your favorite—include the year, the number of people in your group, and the most memorable occurrence on that trip.

1. Ruby Lake (15 minutes to set up tent before dark and my tent blew up into the larch trees before I had a chance to peg it down ... solo hike)
2. Calamity Lake (first time back to the lakes in 23+ years, five campers, on a nine day pack horse trip. Traversing Avion Ridge will forever be remembered!)

3. Upper Three Ridge Lake (first time. Hiked in via Middle Kootenay Pass, Middle Pass Lakes, Rainy Ridge, with three campers, all first timers)
4. Castle Mountain Tarn (first time. Four campers. Hiked up to the ridge beside Castle Mountain twice, morning and afternoon. One hiker fell over in Mill Creek and got soaking wet but continued on for the rest of the day—a real trooper)

Send a camping story and a good photo and we'll enter you for dandy CCWC gift!