

CASTLE WILDERNESS NEWS

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Restoration 2004

by Chris Wutzke

This coming year is going to be a great one for the restoration program. The program has had two years to build itself into something that can get a significant amount of work done in the Castle Wilderness and that is just what is going to happen this summer. We had not been able to get out with many volunteers last year because of the Lynx Creek Fire, but it seems that all of our interested volunteers from last year are even more determined to help out this year. In fact, we have already gained more interest, and with it commitment from Canada World Youth, which has committed four volunteers, four days a week, from June 15 to August 23 to participate on restoration projects within the Castle.

Scouts Canada will also be involved with the program to some extent this year. Last year a lot of planning and time went into organizing workdays for Scouts. They were doing their adventure camps in the Castle and wanted to work in some restoration work to broaden the kids experiences here. The fire kept them from helping out, but there has been interest again for this coming summer with an emphasis on ecological education and restoration in the Castle.

Waterton Park's biologist in charge of restoration in the park and the Sustainable Resources and Development land manager have both been informed about the program's ability to do more restoration work this summer and have been asked for their input on possible large projects. Planning enough work for these volunteers is crucial so if any of you hikers or stewards out there have any suggestions that you feel should be considered please call the CCWC office.

The Lynx Creek Fire has opened up a lot of area that wasn't previously accessible to noxious weeds and ORVs. In hopes of minimizing potential damage reconnaissance work will be done on a regular basis throughout the summer attempting to ensure illegal trails and weeds don't get a foothold in any area.

We will also be returning to all of our regular work sites from the past two years to ensure that they get the needed help to continue their recovery. Noxious weeds, illegal trails, and erosion will be the major focus. I will be also be selecting a small area for reseeding with the native seed I have collected this past fall and winter.

If you are interested in helping out with the Restoration Program, we would love to have you. No matter how many volunteers we have, it is never really enough as long as the work remains to be done.

Stewards Needed

Since 1992, CCWC has operated a volunteer environmental stewardship program. Stewardship is a great way to increase your understanding of nature and the perfect excuse to go hiking. The stewards adopt an area to visit in the Castle and report on a wide range of things like wildlife, plants, and any environmental damage they may see. It does not require any formal training, and anyone who wants to can be a steward. On that note, we can't express this enough; we don't expect anyone to complete a stewardship form with everything a biologist would report unless you are a biologist. Everyone has different strengths and interests; all of them are valuable in revealing different aspects of the wilderness to us.

If you are interested in becoming a steward, contact the CCWC office and we will answer any questions you might have and send you everything you need to become a steward. This year the need for stewards is higher than ever because of the



Chris Wutzke

Proliferation of ox-eye daisy weeds along Gardiner Creek, close to the Lost Creek burn. The weeds are likely to spread into the burn area unless a concerted effort is made to stop it.



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Upcoming Meeting

The next board meeting is on March 20 in Calgary. All are welcome. Contact the office for details.

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.

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and greatly appreciated.***

problems the Lost Creek fire could lead to. Every visit reported on can give us important information that may not have been revealed otherwise. So even if you are only able to get out too the Castle once this year for some hiking, why not become a steward and fill out a form on the area you visit? The form can add to your enjoyment of the hike by acting as a guide for things you can look out for such as wildlife and plants, and you may find yourself noticing things you never had before. The amount of time it takes to fill out the form as you go is very small compared to the help they provide us in recognizing the changing dynamics within each specific area and the restoration work possibilities present there. We really need your help—your efforts will go a long way to helping the Castle.

Stewardship and Restoration Team Up

Last year the stewardship program took on another facet with a new section called “Restoration Possibilities” being added. This section was added in hopes that anything that the stewards notice in their area could help out the Restoration Program’s efforts to locate problem spots in the Castle before they become too large for us to fix. “Problems” include occurrences of noxious weeds, trail erosion, illegal trails, stream bank erosion, heavy litter, and abandoned shelters. Anything you think we might be able to fix or clean up through the Restoration Program is something we are interested in so call us immediately at the CCWC office if you find anything or if you have any questions. With your advice, the restoration program coordinator can plan a “Restoration Workday” to deal with the problem. With the large amount of volunteer support from outside of CCWC this year, let’s take full advantage of the extra help we will have.



Chris Wutzke

Terrain disturbance along a seismic cut line.

Last year a steward’s phone call prevented a blueweed infestation from getting out of hand in Little Pincher Canyon. With the call, the restoration crew was able to visit the site the next day and remove the blueweed from it. Noxious weeds and illegal trails through the burned areas could become wide spread because of the lack of established native vegetation acting as a barrier to these respective problems. This means we are going to need your help more then ever this year to provide as much of a restoration and stewardship presence in the Castle as we can muster to ensure it stays healthy. •



Suspense Over Judicial Review

by James Tweedie

December 18, 2003 was the final day in Court for the CCWC's case for the Judicial Review of Alberta Environment's decision not to require Castle Mountain Resort Inc. to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment. We still await Madame Justice Kenny's judgment on this matter.

In our related Appeal to the Environmental Appeal Board over the removal of the 88 housing unit limit to the CMR Sewage Lagoon Approval, the CCWC is awaiting a ruling from the Board as to whether the Board will accept the CCWC as a "directly affected party". Owing to this matter being part of CMR's isolated island of private development in the midst of public land, the challenge of obtaining "directly affected status" is considerable. The Director responsible for issuing the Amendment to the Sewage Lagoon Approval did not consider the CCWC to be affected, despite our Stewardship of the West Castle River Wetlands Ecological Reserve, under the Parks and Protected Areas Volunteer Stewardship Program. The EAB, by contrast, did not summarily dismiss the case, as Alberta Justice, acting for the Director, Alberta Environment, would have had them do, and the CCWC has been able to present its arguments as to why the case should be heard.

Needless to say, CMR Inc has claimed that this Appeal is "frivolous and vexatious" and is demanding costs to be awarded against the CCWC for bringing the case forward. This situation was foreseen by the CCWC when we made our presentation to the Municipal Council's Public Hearing on CMR's Area Structure Plan in July 2002. CMR's present position appears to confirm what the CCWC stated to Council at that time, namely that "area residents can be quite confident that CMR Inc. will use all legal means at its disposal to limit further public scrutiny or interventions on its activities as we move forward from here."

There has been an interesting sidebar to the present Appeal as a result of some in-depth research into the land transactions relating to the original location of the lagoon. It appears that a substantial part of CMR's Sewage Lagoon was annexed out of the West Castle River Wetlands Ecological Reserve, which was designated by Order in Council in August 1998, around the same time that CMR and Alberta Public Lands Division were settling on the location of the lagoon.

It appears that the land in question, part of the lands that the Westcastle Development Authority held as "Option lands", was still being considered as "Public Land" at the time the Order-in-Council for the Wetlands was made. The designation was described by reference to the 1402 metre contour elevation, and took into account the fact that the "Development Plan" provided to the Government by the WDA, as a precondition for the sale of the "Option Lands", explicitly stated that all lands to the east of the road running through the valley would not be developed in the short term. This has been confirmed by a source in the Alberta Legislative Council, who confirmed that no interventions were submitted to him in the 60-day waiting period prior to the final designation in August 1998, and suggested that Alberta Sustainable Resource Department, Public Lands Division, "seem to have erred in allowing these lands to be annexed from the WCWER". That the lands were subsequently sold to CMR in 1999 is not in dispute, but clearly raises questions about the process that was followed that allowed the the construction of the Sewage Lagoon on these lands, a question that both the CCWC and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society were asking at that time.

The CCWC would like to acknowledge advice from staff at the Environmental Law Centre in helping us to prepare this Appeal without the need to retain counsel.

THANKS!

- to all the members who renewed after the last newsletter, and special thanks to those of you who were able to make donations.
- to Environment Canada for helping to support CCWC's restoration work, through the EcoAction program.

Mark your calendar for the
CCWC Annual General Meeting

Saturday, June 5

International Environment Day

For further info check www.ccwc.ab.ca,
call Chris or Jeff at the office 403 627 5059,
or email ofc@ccwc.ab.ca



2004 Hiking Program

by Chris Wutzke

With spring just around the corner the work on the hiking schedule is underway and some of the past hike leaders have already let us know that they are able to lead hikes again this year. The following are the weekends that have already been filled with a hike. If you are interested in leading a hike in the Castle, contact the office and we will get it into the 2004 hike schedule or answer any questions you might have. We need your help to make the CCWC hike schedule a success and our thanks go out to the hike leaders that continue to support it with your time.

May 12 • Antelope Butte

Patricia Wagenaar will take a midweek (Wednesday) flower walk to this area that has a good showing of early spring flowers and a good chance to see grouse. Elevation gain: 600 feet. Time: 6 hours. Meet at the junction of Hwy 22 and Hwy 3 at 8:30 AM. Call and Verify. Coordinator: Patricia Wagenaar (403-627-2095)

June 12 • Big Sage Natural Area

The Big Sage Natural Area is located about 6 km up the South Castle road and is noted for its variety of plants, including some rare species—notably the largest Alberta population of Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). A short climb from the road reaches an easy trail across the slope of the area. There is also the opportunity to climb a more difficult trail onto Whistler Ridge. Good panoramic views of the South Castle Valley, Castle

Mountain and Barnaby Ridge. There will be botanizing done on this hike providing an opportunity to learn more about the plants of the Castle. Reg is an experienced botanist so for any one interested take special note of this hike. Elevation gain: 500 to 2,200 feet. Time: 6–7 hours. Meet at the Beaver Mines Store at 9 AM. Coordinator: Reg Ernst (403-381-0528)

July 31 Westcastle Valley

This hike follows the cross-country ski trail through the valley floor and lower slopes of the Westcastle Valley below Barnaby Ridge from the Syncline Group Camp to the Westcastle Wetlands Ecological Reserve adjacent to Castle Mountain Resort. This will be relatively leisurely walking through a rich riparian forest area. Although this is close to the intensive random camping areas along the Westcastle road, it remains a significant and secluded stretch of wilderness that provides important habitat and movement corridors for wildlife. It offers great botanizing as well as a marvelous variety of butterflies. Negligible elevation gain. Time 5–6 hours. Meet at the Syncline X-Country trailhead (across from the Group camp) 9 km west of Beaver Mines on Hwy 774 at 10 AM. Coordinator: Dave McNeill (403-627-3476)

Other hikes (as we go to press; contact the office for details)

July 10 • North Kootenay Pass;

July 17 • Lynx Creek/Snowshoe Creek;

July 24 • Blue Lake/South Drywood.

Canada World Youth

Canada World Youth is a non-governmental organization that is funded largely by the Canadian International Development Agency. It brings young Canadians and youth from other countries together to learn while they stay with host families from the communities they are volunteering in.

The program that will bring volunteer workers to CCWC is seven months long and groups nine young people together, three from Canada, three from the USA and three from Mexico. The age of the participants is 20 to 25, and they take part in work placements for ten weeks in each country. The volunteers have host families to stay with in the Crowsnest Pass area and will participate in everyday life with the family.

The volunteers will also be working with Alberta Sustainable Resources and Development, and Heritage Tourism. We expect the volunteers from June 15 to August 23, 2004. We are really excited to be involved with Canada World Youth and will be looking to make their experiences with CCWC as positive and educational as possible. As well, these volunteers give all you stewards a great resource to use to help clean up any problems in your steward area. So let us know so we can add it to the list of prospective restoration work for this summer.

Castle Pictures Needed

Pictures from the past can be a valuable tool when trying to show change a specific landscape has undergone over time. They also make excellent guides and help set goals for restoration work at specific sites. We are trying to update the website with picture comparisons of the Castle Wilderness past and present, and need your help. If you have pictures of an area in its natural state that has since been damaged we would love to have them. Change defined could be anything from new roads or quad trails, weed infestations, or any other type of impact. If you are unsure that there has been any noticeable damage in the area of your photos but they are old enough, send them in and let us figure it out. We can make comparisons between the area and the photo when we visit it this summer. Older photos will really help out our photo library in the long run even if there isn't any damage found in that area at present. If you don't want to donate your pictures we would be happy to duplicate them and return them immediately. Your help on this will be greatly appreciated.

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