



Shell reports on November pipeline break

by James Tweedie, Conservation Director

At the Mt. Backus Hearing we were assured by Shell spokesmen that there was virtually no chance of accidental release of sour gas. On November 19 a tear occurred in an existing pipeline near the proposed new well. Two wells were shut down and nearby residents evacuated. The photograph of the split pipe shows a tear of about 13 inches.

Recently Shell distributed an information letter about the sour gas release which says: "Once the pipeline was exposed, the affected section was removed and sent to a third party for testing. Analysis of the pipe continues and the report will be made available to the ERCB near the end of January."

"While this analysis and reclamation work continues, all of Shell's facilities in the north end of the Waterton field remain shut-in and will continue to be inactive until there is confidence the infrastructure is safe." This means about half of Shell's usual production is shut-in.

Shell held an open house on March 6 at the Pincher Creek Community Hall to provide further information. The pipe liner had not failed and the pipe break is still a mystery. CCWC has been told by the ERCB that the hearing is now expected to re-open in the summer rather than in February. •



Summer plans and fundraising

We expect a re-opened hearing on Shell's Mt. Backus application, and with luck there will be the start of a park management process. Beyond those important tasks, CCWC will focus on the things we like best: hiking, stewardship, and outreach. We will explore as many places as we can, pay attention to what we see, report what we learn, share that information with everyone we can reach, fix what we can, and spread the word farther and wider.

Wendy Ryan will be our Stewardship and Outreach manager again this year. She wants you as a volunteer doing observation, cleanup and weed and riparian improvements in the field. Get some new training: riparian health, bioengineering, weed identification, being aware of unusual species, GPS, bear and cougar aware, and – if you fish - helping identify native trout. Take the CCWC display materials to fairs and gatherings, and spread the word. Get involved with youth organizations getting to know and help the Castle. Leave your contact information and areas of interest at the office, office@ccwc.ab.ca or 403 627 5059, and Wendy will get back to you.

We've applied for funds for Wendy's salary and also for summer staff people to help with mapping of problem areas (weeds, damaged trails, erosion) and restoring what we can. We hope to be able to do significant work with youth, and also to spend time learning from the oldtimers, so we can compare the reality of the Castle Wilderness now with what it was then.

CCWC is planning to work collaboratively with quite a large group on weeds: Waterton Lakes National Park, which has some excellent technical capacity, the MDs of Pincher Creek and Cardston, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, and the Alberta Wilderness Association.

It should be a great season. Come and help if you can! •



Canyon Ridge, near Font Mountain. South Castle headwaters on the right and Westcastle on the left.

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Wendy Ryan, Stewardship & Outreach (back in Spring)

Upcoming Meeting

Members are welcome to attend board meetings. Contact the office for details. Annual General Meeting: May 31.

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.

It's time

It's time for the Castle to be a Park. Call, fax or write your new MLA and new Ministers and tell them so.



Remembering Simon

by friends Karla and Jim

On December 23, 2007 the Castle-Crown lost a friend and supporter. Simon Van Der Heijden fell in love with SW Alberta the first time he saw it. He and his wife Anja bought property near Beaver Mines and dreamed of one day living in the area. Two years ago they began to build their house. Simon used both his chemistry and physics training to implement some of the most technological and environmentally friendly advances into their home. Simon retired last year and they moved into their house this past summer. Tragically Simon died last Christmas from a massive heart attack after hiking up the road to his house. He will be dearly missed. •



Office Notes

by Judy Huntley

- The 2008 CCWC AGM is planned for May 31 in the Lebel Mansion, Pincher Creek. Save the Day! More info in the May newsletter, on the website, or by calling 403 627 5059.
- The hiking schedule will be out with the May newsletter. Let us know if you are willing and able to guide a hike.
- Make sure we have your correct email address so we can cut down on paper and postage.
- Gear is needed for summer work: if you can loan a bike, a bike trailer, or a truck for hauling out weeds, it would be much appreciated.
- An organization called Training Resources for the Environmental Community (TREC) is supported by Wilburforce, one of our continuing supporters. This year TREC has provided facilitation for regular conversations among the groups working for protection of the Castle. Thanks!
- The Municipal District Council and the Council of the Town of Pincher Creek have both expressed their support for better management planning for the Castle, soon. Thanks to you all.

Thanks to Wilburforce Foundation, the LaSalle Adams 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.

Celebrate the recent conservation victory adjacent to the Castle: BP have cancelled their plans to extract coal-bed methane in the B.C. Flathead (which drains into Montana's North Fork of the Flathead along the western edge of Glacier National Park), following long hard work on the part of many people in B.C., Montana and Alberta. More info: <http://flathead.ca/>



Rob Kershaw's book *Exploring the Castle: Discovering the Backbone of the World in Southwestern Alberta* is finished and will be available in stores May 1. It can be pre-ordered from Rocky Mountain Books (www.rmbooks.com) as well as other online booksellers such as Chapters/Indigo and Amazon. •

Celebrate Spring with Gorgeous Castle Wildflowers



Top, left to right: *Aquilegia jonesii*, *Balsamorhiza sagittata*, Conch. Bottom, left to right: *Physaria didymocarpa*, *Townsendia condensata*, Jacob ladder. Feature photo: Looking down South Drywood Creek. All photos by Cyndi Smith.



The C5 Forest Management Plan

from an opinion piece by James Tweedie

The letter by the Director of the Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA) in the January 11 Pincher Creek Echo, that brushes off public concerns over the loss of our local old growth forests, triggered this response.

I have explored opinions of Alberta government staff through a Freedom of Access to Information request relating to the C5 Detailed Forest Management Plan (DFMP) that will provide direction for forestry activities in the Castle and north to the Kananaskis for the next 20 years.

The issue of old growth forests was a pivotal concern for scientists engaged in the planning. What is at stake here when we talk about retaining present and ensuring future old growth forest stands is the future capacity of this landscape to provide many of the “environmental goods and services” that, until recently, we have been privileged to take for granted. The amount of old growth within a region’s watershed is seen as a surrogate index for a healthy and productive landscape that will provide a buffering effect not only for stream flows but also for the local array of animal and plant species.

The province’s Senior Forest Ecologist and the Provincial Biodiversity Specialist were tasked with analysing the state of our local old growth forests.

Early in the planning process misgivings were expressed about the capacity of the computer modeling for the Timber Supply Analysis to address fish and wildlife and biodiversity concerns, noting that there were no numerical targets set for these values and that “these are likely to be controversial since they will almost certainly pit biodiversity objectives against the Annual Allowable Cut.” He also noted: “I am very concerned about the larger planning context. It assumes that the entire C5 area is available for timber harvest. It does not take into account landscape scale, multi-sectoral interests. The Castle area is particularly problematic (see Kennett, 2003, *Spinning Wheels in the Castle: a lost decade for sustainability in Southwestern Alberta*) ... The Fish and Wildlife Division should

be recommending that large areas of C5 not be harvested in the interests of grizzly bears.”

He said that the predictions of the Timber Supply Analysis models vastly exaggerated the extent of future old growth forest and unrealistically relied on the “unmanaged” forest area to meet any future targets.

None of their recommendations were addressed in the Plan, which calls for increasing the Annual Allowable Cut, for increasing the maximum size of clearcuts from 80 to 500 hectares and sets no targets for retaining old growth forests. Our remaining “natural” forests are indeed “on the chopping block.”

The Regional Fish and Wildlife Biologist, whose particular expertise included the complexities of computer modeling, challenged the appropriateness of 500 hectare clearcutting and of using the threat of Mountain Pine Beetle infestation as a justification for the “surge cut” proposed in the Plan. She agreed that the population cannot afford to lose any more habitat. There are no extensive areas of C5 that are unimportant for grizzlies: core grizzly areas and the areas connecting them comprise pretty much the entirety of C5.

That in itself suggests that this area of Alberta is only marginally viable for industrial scale forestry. With the Canada-US Softwood Lumber Agreement still a bone of contention, the recent decision by Spray Lakes Sawmills to consider Forest Stewardship Council certification for their own operations and their closure of their Coleman office, suggests that they recognise this reality and are possibly on the same page as Minister Morton, who recently stated that the priorities for this area should be watershed protection and recreation—something the CrowPac public advisory group was clearly advocating five years ago. •

A more thorough version is available at www.cwc.ab.ca.



Hikers on Avion Ridge. View north from Avion Ridge, down the South Castle; Castle Peak on the horizon.

Cyndi Smith