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Just \$20 per Truckload of Non-merchantable Timber for Castle Clearcut Trees

Details Revealed in Newly-released Freedom of Information Documents

Pincher Creek, AB - Twenty dollars. That's how much grizzly bear habitat and trout spawning streams are worth to the Alberta Government. Twenty dollars is the amount of money that the Alberta government receives in royalties for each truckload of non-merchantable timber removed from the Castle.

This is one of the findings revealed in documents recently released under a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) application by Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA). This includes the green pine and dry wood that would be used for fire wood. Royalties associated with merchantable timber were not revealed in the FOIP documents.

"Twenty dollars per truckload does not come close to the value of the trees as part of a healthy, functioning forest," says Peter Sherrington, AWA past president. "Even as dry wood and young, green pine, these trees provide water filtration services, wildlife habitat, and they are part of the viewscape people love. These values are worth incomparably more than the value of a load of timber."

In their five-year logging plan, Spray Lake Sawmills of Cochrane is planning to remove a total of 4,737 truck loads of timber from the Castle Special Place. This includes many loads of healthy, merchantable lumber as well. Much of this timber will be turned into fence posts, garden mulch, and about 60% will be used as dimensional lumber.

"Who exactly is this logging supposed to be benefitting?" asks Gord Petersen of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. "It can't be benefiting the public at large. Many local businesses have also raised concerns about their long-term economic viability in the face of this logging. This logging is not likely to produce a substantial economic benefit for Albertans, and it actually takes away economic opportunities for local businesses."

Environmental groups and business representatives will be meeting with Diana McQueen, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development on August 23 to discuss the Castle. There is some optimism that a renewed government commitment to openness and transparency will also reflect a renewed commitment to respect the critical environmental values of the Castle.

"We are hopeful that Premier Redford's government will honour its promise to listen to Albertans, good science, and economic reason and announce a stop to the logging of the Castle and its permanent protection as a Wildland Park," says Sarah Elmeligi of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

The complete FOIP document can be seen at <http://albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlands/areas-of-concern/castle/archive-1/2012-07-02-castle-logging-foip-information>

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