



And after we've mortgaged the Mountains, what then?

credit: View of Three Sisters, Glenbow Museum #NA 937 - 2

# PAVING PARADISE

## BOW VALLEY DEVELOPMENT

When Europeans first came to this area, the Bow Valley was seen simply as a transportation route to somewhere else. In 1890 when this picture was taken, the area had become a source of timber, coal and hydroelectricity. Canmore boasted a population of about 450 people, most of whom depended on the lumber and coal industry for their livelihood. When the timber was gone, people turned to coal. When the coal reserves ran out limestone became the area's main industry. With most of the resources disappearing it looked like the town would suffer the same fate. Then one last resource was discovered and now history threatens to repeat itself.

As dawn's first light illuminates the jagged edge of Mount Yamnuska, a climber searches for a critical handhold as she ascends one of Western Canada's most popular climbing spots. In the shaded woodlands below an equally intense quest takes place. The discovery? A rare pearly white form of the Yellow Lady Slipper. Further west a hiker pauses for a moment along West Wind Creek then moves on, past the gnarled spruce, over the moss-covered rocks and most important, past the cow elk who, for a brief moment, is oblivious to everything but the newly born calf next to her. Of course the name of the creek isn't important to the elk, nor is the invisible boundary of Banff National Park, just 30 kilometers away. What is important and critically so, is that they exist. On the Bow River a fisherman holds a brown trout for just a moment longer. The scales glint scarlet gold in the last rays of the sun. His hand opens and with a final glittering flash the fish is gone.

Wildlands and wildlife- now used as the newest lure for an ancient business. Times once were that with

tourism as with other business, Bow Valley was seen as just a way to get somewhere else. The destination? Banff National Park, often described as the crown jewel of Canada's National Parks.

Unfortunately for Banff, tourism became less of a business and more of an industry much like coal mining. As a result, the jewel doesn't quite have its old sparkle and to developers Canmore looks a lot like a diamond in the rough.

Sound familiar? Find a resource, deplete it then move on. Ah, but that was in the 50's and 60's. We've learned our lesson, right? That depends on who is doing the learning. Developers and politicians, while not denying that Banff is overcrowded and its facilities strained to the bursting point, see the solution in creating more facilities in order to handle the increased demand. But wait. Exactly what is it that tourists are demanding? And like Dr. Frankenstein and his monster, how responsible is the developer for molding and creating the demand.

It's not difficult to track the evolution of this megamonster. You can see it taking shape in the idea that, if tourists would come to Banff on the slim chance that they might see a wild grizzly from a distance, think of the attraction created by baiting grizzlies to the park garbage dump. In the nineties you can see its final hulking form in the "Destination Resort." The idea here is that if a day lodge offering wilderness trips is good then a resort is better and a destination resort offering golf, tennis and water slides is better still. Trouble is, somewhere between a day lodge and a resort we lose wilderness. Not reacting well to its treatment as just another

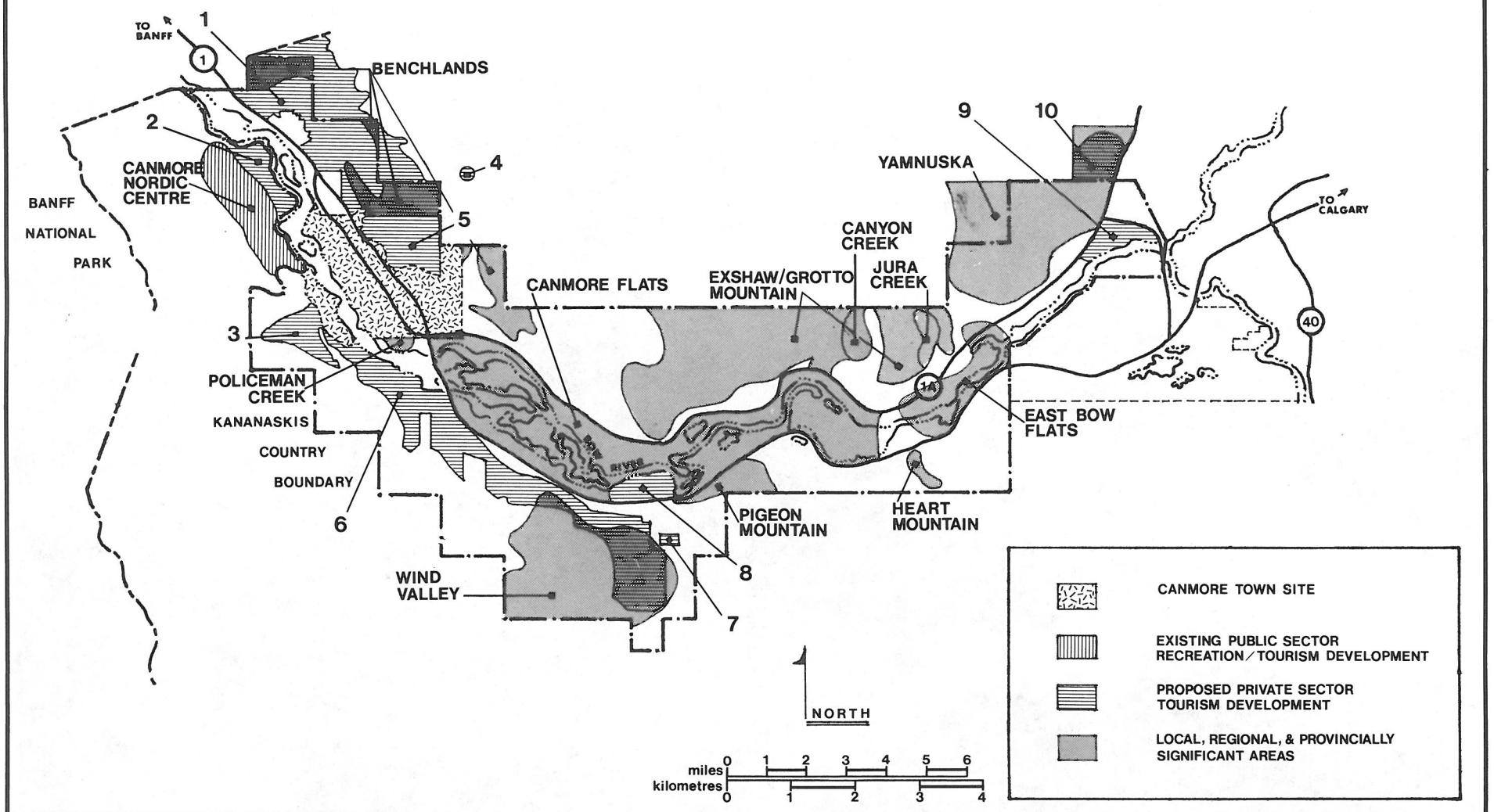
amenity - such as a water slide or tennis court, wildlife also disappears. But the insidious thing about it is that at this point the industry doesn't need wilderness as a resource any more. Because along with the transformation from daylodge to destination resort, the tourist is made to change from one who searches for a glimpse of a grizzly to one who searches for a golf ball in the rough or a tennis ball on concrete. The tourist is enticed to find fulfillment in the resort's facilities. In order to cover the cost of these facilities the operator must attract more clients so he builds more facilities. More water slides, more tennis courts, maybe an amusement park and for those folks who just might want to "get back to nature", a petting zoo.

The fact that wilderness has disappeared or become a sterile backdrop to this tragedy of errors is of little concern to the entrepreneur; nor is the displacement of residents who originally chose the area because it offered the things that wilderness does, grandeur, complexity and an unfathomable mystery. Nope, the resort entrepreneur is, of economic necessity, now concerned with feeding the appetite he created.

All of which brings us back to Bow Valley: the next site for industrial tourism's open pit mining? Not if we've learned our lessons and stop treating wildland and wildlife as if it were only so much coal to be exploited. Not if we listen to tourism experts who conclude that since it is the wilderness or even the perception of wilderness which is drawing tourists to the Bow Corridor then that wilderness or perception needs to be protected. Now. Before tourism destroys the very experience tourist seeks.



# PAVING PARADISE ~ PLACES TO SAVE



## HOW TO USE THIS MAP

Sit down with your best friend and/or spouse, the kids, your neighbour or just yourself. Grab crayons and start coloring. Color the environmentally significant areas, yup, you guessed it, green and the tourism developments orange. The image that starts to emerge is one with a whole lot of puce in it. But the big picture is a lot more complicated than that because the actual impact of those orange areas isn't determined by neat black borders on a map. The big picture would have to account for the pathway of pesticide-laden water trickling underground, the fate of a displaced grizzly fighting for a new territory, the impact which thousands of additional tourists will have on the wildlands of Banff National Park. An impossible task? Maybe. Ironically it's only in our attempt to see the big picture that some of the finer details come through. **Like- PLACES TO SAVE:**

### BANFF NATIONAL PARK International Significance

Unthinkable that developments outside the Park gate could threaten this World Heritage Site? It's time to think again.

#### The Threat

##### Cougar Heights Resorts (See Map, # 1)

As with most proposals on public land, details on this megadevelopment are unavailable and will remain unavailable until an Environmental Impact Assessment is called for and submitted or until Forestry, Lands and Wildlife decides to release them. Forestry Minister Leroy Fjordbotten recently extended the lease for an additional three years to Edmonton developer Jack Dubazs. Even if no development occurs, the developer stands to make money on the deal. Unless ordered otherwise by the minister, the lease holder can sell his rights to leased land at a price mutually agreed upon by the two proponents.

##### Georgetown Developments (See Map, # 2)

In 1990, Peter Neish was given the option to lease public land in Kananaskis Country in order to build a 500 room hotel, 45 holes of golf and recreate a 1916 mining town on 200 acres of public land. Now that the Town of Canmore holds the lands, the proposal has resurfaced but no one in Alberta Lands and Wildlife is willing to say where it is in the planning process.

Canmore Alpine Resorts Development (See Map, # 5 Description Below)  
Three Sisters Golf Resorts Inc. (See Map, # 6 Description Right)

### EXSHAW / GROTTO MOUNTAINS Provincial Significance

The lower slopes of both these mountains are critical wintering ranges for elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep. Mid-flank on Grotto Mountain is the Rat's Nest Cave, known and loved by spelunkers throughout Alberta. For explorers willing to negotiate an initial 18 meter drop into darkness, it is a subterranean spectacle right out of *The Hobbit*. Contemplating the ten thousand years it took for Grotto Creek to slowly shape and smooth Grotto Canyon might be just the thing resort developers need to get an idea of the history behind the special place we call Bow Valley. Certainly the pictographs painted in red ochre on the canyon walls are testimony to the fact that natives found the area worthy of contemplation and comment.

#### The Threat

Even to the valley's most casual of tourists, the notion of "indomitable" mountains disappears with a quick glance south from the Trans Canada. Carved up like massive legs of lamb, these mountains and the wildlife they support are very vulnerable to increased limestone quarrying. Future encroachment on the cave is likely to result in its closure. Forestry, Lands and Wildlife has identified these areas for future mineral extraction expansion.

### BENCHLANDS Regional Significance

Easily seen from the Trans Canada Highway the south facing slopes of these unnamed mountains have been identified as one of the most important Elk and Bighorn Sheep wintering areas in the Bow Valley.

#### The Threat

##### Cougar Heights Resort (See Map, # 1)

##### Canmore Alpine Resort (See Map, # 5)

This development has already devoured 480 acres of public land for a luxury 500 room hotel, 27 hole golf course and as yet undisclosed amount of residential housing. Linked to Canmore's water and sewer system it will burden an already strained Bow River. The development will destroy habitat on site and become yet another urban obstacle for elk and bighorn sheep trying to move throughout their traditional range. Alberta Dept. of the Environment has exempted it from an Environmental Impact Assessment (E.I.A.).

### CANMORE FLATS Provincial Significance

This remarkably undisturbed floodplain is a wealth of willow swamps, braided streams and woodland. It is one of the most significant Brown Trout spawning areas in Alberta and home to Osprey and Bald Eagles. A portion of this area has been designated a Natural Area by the provincial government.

#### The Threat

##### River's Bend Golf Course (See Map, # 8)

Located a stone's throw from the Bow River, an E.I.A. has been called for on this 18 hole golf course, clubhouse/resort center and serviced campground. The developer has applied for 74 acres of public land with additional development on lands owned by the M.D. of Bighorn. Risk of groundwater and river water contamination from herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers used on this golf course and the proposed massive Three Sisters Golf Resort. River flow reduction from diversion of water for irrigation, housing developments and other uses results in higher water temperatures, lower dissolved oxygen levels and a reduced ability of the streams to assimilate waste. Nutrient loading by sewage disposal and fertilizer run-off increases algae growth which also decreases oxygen levels. Siltation from clear cutting and construction destroys fish spawning habitat.

### EAST BOW FLATS Regional Significance

The white spruce and poplar woodland found throughout these willow swamps and river channels produces an abundance and diversity of breeding birds. The dynamics and productivity of this riverine habitat is very dependant on periodic flooding.

#### The Threat

Disturbance to Bow River water flow rates such as withdrawal for recreational developments or impoundment at Lac Des Arc could have a serious impact on this area.

### YAMNUSKA Provincially Significant

Bring any wildflower enthusiast to Yamnuska and you risk losing them forever to the area's treasure trove of blossoms representative of mountain, foothills and prairie. Rare and uncommon plants include moss gentian, one flowered goldenweed, the carnivorous slender-leaved sundew and unusually large concentrations of yellow lady's slipper and western wood lily. Yamnuska is also one of the few localities in the world for a rare white form of the yellow lady's slipper.

Geology professors, on the other hand, have been known to go into fits of ecstasy when describing the "overthrust formation of limestone strata from the Cambrian and Devonian periods which marks the boundary of the Front Ranges of the Rocky Mountains." Climbers refer to this formation simply as "Yam" and any day in spring, summer or fall will find them gleefully evading gravity for the 300 meter ascent.

In 1974 the Environmental Council of Alberta recommended the area be designated as a provincial park. Subsequent to this proposal, the M.D. of Bighorn, Calgary Regional Planning Commission and the Dept. of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife have recommended protection under Natural Area or Conservation Area designations. To date, this mosaic of lakes and beaver ponds, springs and swamps, grass and woodlands continues to be denied any type of protective status.

#### The Threat

##### Four Season Resort Development (See Map, # 10)

Originally proposing this location near the base of Yamnuska, developer Norm Trouth has recently moved his development proposal somewhere to the west side of the Yamnuska area. Details released describe an R.V. campground of 600 units, 50 chalet units and a golf driving range.

### CANYON CREEK Regional Significance

Although the start to the informal trail up this valley is Dickensque- over the limestone rubble, past the cement factory and the church, the valley itself is a straight from Camelot. Moist, mossy seeps in rock outcroppings support the largest known concentration of sparrow's egg and pale coral-root orchids in the region.

#### The Threat

Vegetation doesn't take kindly to dynamite blasting. Replanting is difficult if not impossible. Orchids of any type are especially vulnerable because their seeds frequently fail to germinate unless stimulated by the presence of a certain fungi. Forestry, Lands and Wildlife has identified this area for future mineral extraction expansion.



## WIND VALLEY Provincial Significance

In real estate lingo, "location" is everything. The same thing holds true for wildlife habitat. Wind Valley's geographical location ensures that when Chinooks blow, they funnel through the valley, exposing nutritious grasses and shrubs. Ungulates already stressed by winter's cold expend less energy obtaining food in these conditions. In addition to alpine meadows and grassy fields, this valley offers plenty of shelter in its montane and subalpine coniferous forests.

It should come as no surprise that Wind Valley, in conjunction with Pigeon Mountain, supports what is considered to be one of the largest herds of bighorn sheep (300) in North America. Bighorn need large wilderness areas. When they are crowded in concentrated areas, they are more susceptible to epidemic diseases such as pneumonia or weakening from parasitic lungworm, which cause many deaths among them.

Extirpated over most of its former range, approximately 136-186 elk use this valley extensively for winter range and

summer calving grounds. There is also evidence that at least two grizzly bears, a boar and a breeding female, use the valley on a regular basis. To all but a few hikers and outfitters, the rest of the valley's inhabitants are pretty much a mystery. Certainly there are numbers of large carnivores, black bears, cougars, lynx and wolverines. Banff biologists report regular "reconnaissance" missions by members of the Banff wolf pack into Wind Valley.

To conclude that Wind Valley is a refuge would be right and at the same time, wrong. Wrong because these ungulates and large predators depend on far more than Wind Valley. The elk, bears and cougars travelling to and from Banff National Park depend on safe passage as do the sheep which move to higher elevations in the summer; as far north as the South Ghost and as far south as Mount Allan. The predator responsible for most deaths in these populations is a near sighted, 1,550 kg package of metal, hurtling down the Trans Canada at 110 kms hour. Alberta Fish and Wildlife biologists consider



credit: D. Shackleton

the combined losses of elk to predation and highway road kills to be near or at the maximum sustainable level for this population.

Wind Valley has been identified in municipal, provincial and Calgary

Regional planning documents as an area of critical wildlife importance. Public lands in this valley and its upper reaches are zoned critical wildlife or prime protection.

### The Threat

Three Sisters Golf Resorts Incorporated.(T.S.G.R.I.) Canmore Town Council refers to it as a megaproject and for good reason.

Proposed: another highway paralleling the TransCanada,  
- more than 6,200 houses,  
- four 18 hole golf courses,  
- 2,275 hotel rooms,  
- total water requirement based on Three Sister's figures —

2 billion 680 million 305 thousand 70 US gallons annually 4.156  
- garbage generated per day 44.1 tonnes.(Excluding construction related waste which contributes up to 50% more during peak construction activity.)  
- total population increase of 20,179!!  
T.S.G.R.I.'s own Environmental Impact Statement reports that the development will affect large carnivores such as wolves, bears and cougars " through a variety of adverse habitat

alterations which will result in habitat loss, sensory disturbance, obstructions to movements, and direct mortality from road kills and human-wildlife interactions." It doesn't get much clearer than that. If T.S.G.R.I gets the go-ahead, the "protective" zoning on public lands around the development won't matter a damn to the wildlife of Wind Valley.



### READING THE FINE EIA PRINT OR MITIGATION MEANS HAVING TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY - OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

Environmental Impact Assessments were originally touted as the ultimate planning tool for environmental protection. Since then, politicians throughout Canada and especially Alberta have come to see Environmental Impact Assessments as little more than plumbing permits. Pieces of paper that, once in hand, mean the project goes ahead regardless of the content. Unfortunately, the content itself has shifted emphasis. Now, instead of evaluating all options- including no development, E.I.A.'s concentrate on ways of reducing the impact of development, a process called mitigation.

Mitigation is like the proverbial "good news/bad news" situation-often with an ironic twist. As T.S.G.R.I.'s Environmental Impact Assessment would have it : the bad news is that grizzly bears live in the Wind Valley. The good news is that they'll likely leave quietly on their own before we have to destroy them.

### QUOTABLE QUOTES FROM T.S.G.R.I.'s E.I.A.

"Wolves are renowned for their shy nature with respect to man. It is therefore expected that intensive development and associated disturbances will inevitably lead to the abandonment by wolves of the lower Bow Corridor including the Three Sisters Project area."

"We predict that cougar on the Three Sisters Project Area may become a nuisance species that will have to be destroyed for reasons of human safety."

"Sensory disturbance from the proposed Three Sisters Development will initially displace resident black bears from their home ranges. However, a few resident bears may habituate to

human presence, in which case there is a high probability that these animals will at some time come into close contact with humans and may ultimately have to be destroyed by management action."

"Because of the proximity of some portions of the Three Sisters Project Area to important grizzly bear habitat and the likelihood of human-bear intractions and subsequent bear control, as well as the potential for road kills, it is anticipated that bear mortality will increase as a result of the construction and operation of the Three Sisters Development."

"At least two grizzly bears utilize the Wind Creek area. Construction will result in the loss of a portion of their home range. Grizzly is incompatible to the development."

"Groups of bighorn sheep that move between wintering ranges on Pigeon Mountain and Wind Ridge via a route along Pigeon Creek and the lower area of Wind Valley will be disturbed by construction activities, human use, and vehicular traffic in Wind Valley. "

"If approval is received, attempts will be made to obliterate existing trails to and along the Pigeon Creek bluffs to help divert bighorn sheep to their secondary movement corridor."

"The known general pattern of cougar distribution and abundance along the front ranges of the eastern slopes suggests that cougar on the property are not provincially significant, although they may be regionally and locally significant. Cougar residing seasonally within Banff National Park and other protected wilderness areas which may depend on prey abundance on the Three Sisters Project Area and environs are, however, considered nationally and provincially significant and should be given careful management consideration." (Right!, as if we can hand out passports to identify those cougars from Banff which will get safe passage and those from Wind Valley that we can blast.)

"The wolverine is recognized as being a vulnerable species. Due to construction and operational disturbance it is predicted that wolverine will permanently abandon the Three Sisters Project Area. "

"Therefore, although elk abundance may initially decline in response to the Three Sisters Development, the Wind Ridge-Pigeon Mountain elk group is unlikely to be eliminated by the project." (Oh, stop! I just can't stand any more good news!)

"Closure of hunting on the south side of Bow Corridor is expected to eliminate a major portion of the hunting mortality in the Wind Ridge -Pigeon Mountain elk group."

"Golf course run-off and seepage may contaminate aquatic systems with fertilizers and pesticides."

Cummulative Impacts from Three Sisters Development, Canmore Alpine Resorts and Mountain Meadows Golf Course.

"As a result of direct loss of habitat, obstructions to movements, changes in drainage patterns and direct mortality it is possible that an unknown but large proportion of the local population of amphibians and reptiles may be permanently eliminated. "

"All impacts to songbirds are expected to result in an overall reduction in the diversity of songbirds as well as the abundance of most native songbirds. "

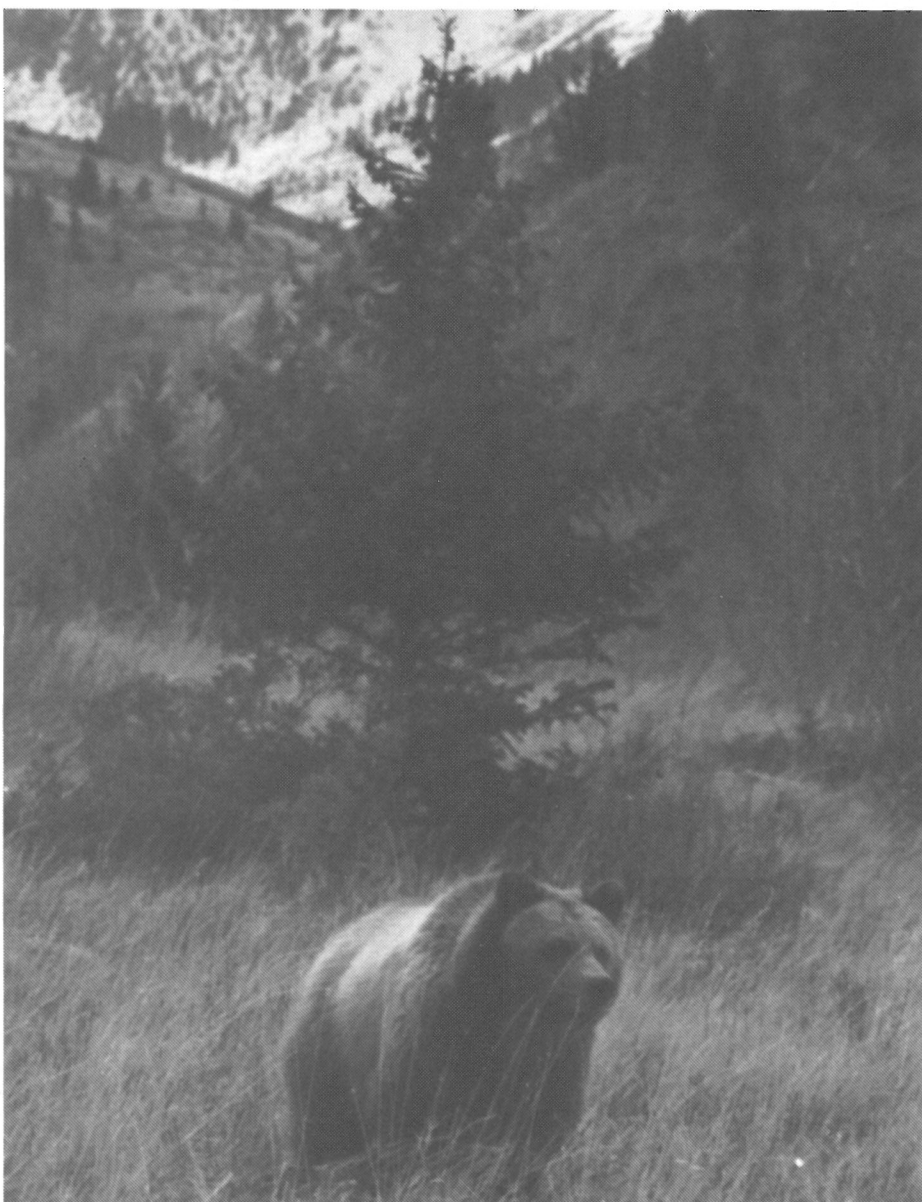
"An increase in ambient NO2 and particulates as traffic increases may exceed the air quality objectives in selcted areas of the Bow Corridor under poor dispersion conditions."

"Increased development and increased access to the Bow River will place greater pressure on existing fish stocks. The Provincial Government should consider reduced catch limits, restrict bait usage, reduce angling season and if necessary, institute selective catch and release policy."



credit: I. Ross





Animals like this grizzly which used to call Bow Valley home will not be "displaced"! They'll be dead.

## Make Waves

### Write the local M.L.A.

Send him a copy of the Paving Paradise map.

**Brian Evans**

#202,705-8 Str.

Canmore, TOL OMO

Ask that he call for a moratorium on Bow Corridor development.

### Write the Natural Resources Conservation Board

**Mr. G. De Sorcy**

640-5 Ave. S.W.

Calgary, T2P 3G4

\*Send them a copy of the Paving Paradise map.

\*Ask that the hearing for Three Sisters Golf Resorts be broadened to evaluate the impact which Three Sisters, in conjunction with other developments, will have on the common resources of the Bow Valley.

### Write the Federal Environment Minister or the Minister of State for the Environment.

**Hon. John Charest**

Terrasses de la Chaudiere

28th Flr. #10 Wellington Str.

Hull, Quebec

K1A 0H3

**Pauline Browes**

Parliament Bldg.

West Block, Rm 409

K1A 0A6

\* Send them a copy of the Paving Paradise map.

\* Tell them what's happening on the doorstep of Banff National Park.

\* Ask them to establish an Environmental Assessment Review Panel.

## UNTYING THE PLANNING PRETZEL

Planning is supposed to be positive, prescriptive and long-term. The Bow Corridor suffers from a planning system that;

- 1) is uncoordinated and complex but complex as it is,
- 2) fails to give adequate consideration to environmental and social issues and finally
- 3) rather than giving firm direction for difficult choices, the plans are so ambiguous that opposing sides can use exactly the same guidelines to support their arguments.

It is not surprising that this "system" has led to the current development controversy in the Bow Valley. Indeed, special places throughout the world have struggled with similar development controversies. Many lost. But if the experience of Cancun, Mexico, Aspen, Colorado or the Florida Keys teaches us anything it is that you're not going to solve the problem by giving more power to planners or politicians. This doesn't mean the perfect solution is always going to be reached by giving more power to the people but it's a step in the right direction. We also need to take a closer look at what it is that makes an area special. A great deal of what makes the Bow Valley and Canmore special is found in its wildlands and wildlife.

It is imperative that the cumulative impacts from all the development proposals be evaluated. In order for this evaluation to have any bearing on reality, common sense dictates a moratorium on development. Although Three Sisters Golf Resorts will go before the Alberta Natural Resources Conservation Board (N.R.C.B.), this Spring the Board's current plans are to evaluate this megadevelopment in isolation from all other tourism projects. The N.R.C.B. has the mandate to broaden its evaluation. Additionally, the Federal Department of the Environment has the mandate to call for a joint federal/provincial Environment Assessment Review Panel in issues involving federal jurisdiction such as national parks (Banff National Park) and fisheries (Bow River).

**How about this? How about instead of asking what will probably go wrong with proposed development and then making plans for "fixing" it when it does, how about we find out what's working, what people value and what we can do to conserve and improve what is there already. Chances are we'll find out that Wind Valley is "working" very well on its own thank-you. We'll find out that tourists value a place like Canmore where the residents can still afford to smile at them. We'll find out that unless we act now, history will repeat itself.**



Canmore residents who are made to feel guilty because they're accused of being selfish in their fight to retain a quality of life rare in North America, might find comfort in a little doctrine from English common law. The concept of "ancient lights" guaranteed access to sunlight for firstcomers. As London grew, with buildings abutting each other on small lots, the English courts established a rule that "the

owner of a house will be restrained by injunction if he makes any erections or improvements so as to obstruct the ancient lights of an adjoining house." Watching the alpenglow on Chinaman's peak, fly fishing in the Bow River or just knowing grizzlies are free to roam Wind Valley may be as difficult to quantify as sunshine but these values are no less important.

## Ode to the Municipality and Depts. of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and Tourism



Road - killed grizzly - Lake Louise.

Now houses are "units" and people are digits, And grizzlies exiled to lands suited for midgets Government plans are suicidally bad The soulless work of this myopic triad.

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2years - \$44.00

Student/Senior \$10

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Subscription includes both publications.

Each published quarterly by the Alberta

Wilderness Association, P.O. Box 6398,

Stn. D, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1, Phone

(403) 283 - 2025

Second Class Mail Registration #8645

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