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AWA Receives Membership in Forest Stewardship Council

By Jillian Tamblyn

The FSC Board of Directors has approved the Alberta Wilderness Association application for membership in the Forest Stewardship Council in the ENVIRONMENTAL - NORTH Chamber. The Forest Stewardship Council is an international non-profit organization founded in 1993 to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. In Canada an FSC Canada Working Group, was created in 1996. FSC Canada is designed to promote good forest management across Canada and increase the level of market participation in the FSC system through outreach, education and communications.

Several Conservation Organizations in Alberta, including the AWA, have been looking into the opportunities and challenges for FSC Certification provincially. The AWA has recently applied for and obtained membership status in FSC that gives us the opportunity to vote in and participate in the development of an FSC process in Alberta and Canada. We have become involved in FSC because unlike other certification programs, environmental, social and economic concerns are represented equally.

A great deal of work has been going on in Alberta and Canada. In August FSC Canada held a conference on Indigenous Peoples and FSC. In September FSC held a meeting to set the stage for a standards process for the vast boreal forests of Canada. In November Albertans for a Wild Chinchaga, AWA, CPAWS Edmonton and Federation of Alberta Naturalists will be releasing a report entitled Structural Impediments to Forest Stewardship Council Certification in Alberta, Overcoming Barriers to Well-Managed Forests. This report will focus on the lack of protected areas and the petroleum industry's undermining of forest tenures and planning. These issues are challenges we must address to enable FSC Certification in Alberta.

As the FSC Council representative for the AWA I will use this as one many tools to work towards the protection of more wilderness in Alberta. A secondary benefit is improved forestry practices that will produce many beneficial results including protecting wildlife and their habitats outside of parks.