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Bighorn Wildland Gets Reprieve From Increased Helicopter Flights

AWA is encouraged by a decision made by the Municipal Planning Commission of Clearwater County last week. Icefield Helicopters (Rimrock Holdings Inc.) applied for an increase in their activity over the National Parks and sensitive areas of the Bighorn Wildland. The County declined their application.

“This decision is a positive step in the realization that these types of operations are not compatible with wilderness values,” says Alberta Wilderness Association’s (AWA) conservation biologist Lara Smandych.

Noisy helicopters disturb, stress and displace wildlife populations, particularly during sensitive seasons and at certain times of day and have no place in wilderness. Helicopters disrupt the solitude of the wilderness experience of backcountry users and diminish its value. A local survey found that a large majority of users of this area think that helicopter tourism of wilderness areas is inappropriate

AWA and local tourism operators want increased restrictions placed on heli-tourism operations over wilderness areas especially in the area of Bighorn Wildland, one of the last great wilderness areas in this province. AWA has been campaigning for formal protection of this area for more than 30 years and is pleased to find support from Clearwater County.

For more information, please contact Lara Smandych, AWA, at 403-283-2025 or visit www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

