



Release Date: November 14th, 2003

Bighorn Threatened Once Again by Heli-Tourism

Despite Clearwater County's refusal to lift the restrictions on the number of helicopters used by Icefield Helicopter (Rimrock Holding's Inc.), the company has appealed the decision. If successful in their appeal, the company will be allowed to increase their heli-tourism activity over the National Parks and other sensitive areas including the Bighorn Wildland. Your action is required to help the County uphold their initial decision.

BACKGROUND

Icefield Helicopters (Rimrock Holding Inc) has been operating heli-tourism, hiking and fishing excursions over the National Parks and surrounding wilderness since 1999. Earlier this year, the company applied to the Clearwater County Municipal Planning Commission for the removal/relaxation of a condition from Development Permit No.14/02 that restricts the number of helicopter flights they make in a day.

On October 14th, 2003, Clearwater County notified Rimrock Holdings Inc. that their application for a development permit was refused for reasons that included concern over the potential impact increased flights may have on wildlife, the environment and recreational users.

In response to this refusal, Rimrock Holdings appealed the decision. The appeal will be heard Monday, November 24th, 2003 at 7:00pm in Rocky Mountain House at the Clearwater County Council Chambers.

It is well known that noise from helicopters disturb, stress and displace wildlife populations, particularly during sensitive seasons and at certain times of day. Helicopters also disrupt the solitude and diminish the value of the wilderness experience of backcountry users.

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.

ACTION

Your letters of support to uphold Clearwater County's decision not to allow an increase in heli-tourism over wilderness are needed. Written submissions can be sent prior to November 24th, 2003 to:

Clearwater County:

Box 550

Rocky Mountain House, AB, T4T 1A4

Email: awinarski@county.clearwater.ab.ca

Fax: 403-845-7338

Please forward copies of your letters to the Alberta Wilderness Association (awa.scp@shaw.ca). For more information, please contact Lara Smandych, AWA, at 403-283-2025 or visit

www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

