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## YOUR COMMENTS NEEDED ON FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE WHALEBACK

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

In May 1999, the government of Alberta announced the protection of two areas within the Whaleback area of southern Alberta: the 20,778 ha Bob Creek Wildland and the 7,760 ha Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. An Advisory Committee for the two protected areas has recently produced a draft Management Plan for the two areas, which will determine their management for the next few years. This Plan is open for public comment, and we would encourage anybody with an interest in this truly spectacular area to take this opportunity to comment.

Alberta Wilderness Association will be making the following recommendations in its response to the draft plan:

### Off-Highway Vehicle Use

Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use is **not** an appropriate use of protected areas.

The plan states: "*The primary goal of the Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland is as follows: To preserve the natural heritage ... of the two protected areas in perpetuity. Other provincial protected areas program goals ... are of secondary importance with respect to the protected areas. The heritage appreciation and outdoor recreation goals may be met, but only to the extent that their attainment does not conflict with or impinge on the preservation goal.*"

The plan then proposes allowing OHV access on designated trails. This is clearly in conflict with the stated aim of the plan. The Plan even mentions Bill 24 (the June 2003 amendment to the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act) "*prohibiting recreational off-highway vehicle use in Heritage Rangelands.*"

Of particular concern is a designated trail along White Creek, which is one of the few east-west animal migration corridors in the area and of particular importance for migrating elk (the Whaleback supports one of the province's two largest wintering elk herds).

### Buffer Zones

The protected areas are a part of the larger Whaleback ecosystem. Lands outside the protected areas are also an integral part of this broader ecosystem and should also be managed sympathetically. Oil and gas development adjacent to protected areas should not be allowed.

### Funding

Management of protected areas such as this, including monitoring and enforcement, require adequate funding. Budgets of enforcement staff have been consistently cut during the past decade, and there is an urgent need to restore funds to manage these areas to a suitable standard.

### Oil and Gas

Crown petroleum and natural gas leases in the protected areas and outside were donated to Nature Conservancy Canada in 1999 by BP Amoco. "*Our partnership with the Nature Conservancy ensures that oil and gas activity will never occur in the Whaleback protected area,*" said Joseph H. Bryant, president of Amoco Canada Petroleum at the time. The Department of Energy needs to make assurances that these leases will not be resold once they expire in April 2004.





**Riparian Areas**

More measures should be introduced to ensure that riparian habitat is not damaged by grazing operations.

**Carnivores**

Management should allow for the full complement of native carnivore species. Management of potential livestock predators should focus on removing only individuals that are known to prey on livestock, while leaving non-preying animals.

Copies of the Draft Management Plan can be obtained via the Alberta Community Development Web site at <http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/preserving/parks/draftmgmtplans.asp>, or by calling Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Southwest Area at (403) 382-4097.

Comments are to be returned by **January 26, 2004** to Cliff Thesen, Area Manager, Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Division, Room 416, Administration Building, 909 – 3 Avenue North, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1H 0H5. Phone: (403) 382-4097; Fax: (403) 382-4257; E-mail: [cliff.thesen@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cliff.thesen@gov.ab.ca).

AWA would appreciate a copy of your response; please send to Box 6398, Station D, Calgary, AB, T2P 2E1 or [awa@shaw.ca](mailto:awa@shaw.ca).

