



COLD SHOWER FOR NEW WATER STRATEGY

By Andy Marshall



A former government water specialist has branded the province's recently released Water Strategy a "remarkable feat of underachievement."

Initiated by Environment Minister Lorne Taylor, the strategy document fails to grapple with the "knotty problems" of water pricing and enforcement of the province's water regulations and offers little real support for protecting Alberta's threatened watersheds, says Bob Morrison. Head of his own consulting company called Waxwing Synthetics & Resolution

Inc., Morrison worked for 24 years as an Alberta Environment water planner.

He also criticizes the strategy document for ignoring Albertans' desire for a fairer allocation of water rights in drought-plagued southern Alberta where the government says its "first-in-time, first-in-right" approach, which favours the long-established irrigation districts, will be maintained.

"The government has retreated into procrastination, wishful thinking and stubborn indifference to the serious and complicated water problems that Albertans face," Morrison says in a recent commentary on the Water Strategy.

Based on over 18 months of consultations and discussions throughout Alberta highlighting water quantity and quality issues, the strategy outlines measures -- valued at \$916 million over the next 10 years -- to achieve three priorities:

- Secure drinking water
- Healthy aquatic systems
- Reliable water supply to support provincial economic development.

The strategy places a strong emphasis on conservation and sets a 10-year goal starting in 2005 of improving by 30 per cent the "overall efficiency and productivity of water."



Louise Falls, Hay River

C. Bruun

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Although surveys conducted during the consultation process show 68 per cent of respondents support a price on water for individual consumers, industry and irrigation farmers, the strategy document says the government will wait until 2007 before making a move “on the merit of economic instruments to meet water conservation and productivity objectives.” This could include charging for water.

The environment minister’s spokeswoman Val Mellesmoen acknowledges the criticism over delays in implementing pricing and other strategies to cut down water use. But, she adds: “We need to balance things out, do things in a measured way to proceed. We can’t change the laws overnight.”

Reactions from interested parties may justify that caution.

Irrigation farmers, who, according to figures in the strategy, consume almost 45 per cent of the province’s known allocated water volumes, are predictably opposed to pricing. Other ranchers and farmers are similarly upset about the prospect of buying their water.

“If we’re going to be charged to water our cattle, we’re dead,” says Caroline area rancher Don Bester, already beset by beef market doldrums arising from mad cow disease. He’s a founder of the Butte Action Committee, set up four years ago to tackle ranchers’ concerns about the energy industry use of fresh water in enhanced oil recovery processes.

The strategy pegs energy extraction use at 4.6 per cent of all provincial allocations. “If they have to pay, good enough,” says Bester. “But, I’m not paying for my water.”

Ricardo Acuna, executive director of the Parkland Institute, warns against pricing. “Once you’ve priced water for industry, you’ve priced it for everybody,” he says. “Then, it becomes part of the market . . . you’re commodifying a public good.” In the marketplace, water may then be open to the highest bidder. “It becomes a competitive commodity, and all bets are off on the sale of water to the U.S., for example,” Acuna explains.

More important than pricing, he says, is the need for the province to set limits on the various sectors using water.

Cheryl Bradley, a member of the Oldman River Basin advisory committee representing aquatic ecosystem interests, believes it is unrealistic and untenable to charge irrigation farmers for water on a volume basis. “I’m not sure we want to

devastate our agriculture industry,” she says.

These arguments win little sympathy from former Alberta Wilderness Association president Cliff Wallis. “Pricing should be for everybody,” he says. “Until that happens, we will continue to make bad allocation decisions, continue to build dams and support an irrigation infrastructure that is very expensive.”

Morrison notes that holders of irrigation water licenses in southern Alberta already have the potential to reap windfall profits from transferring their water rights within the district. For example, Jack Bratt, a 70-year-old landowner in the St. Mary River Irrigation District, sold the water rights to his small farm for \$30,000, according to a recent CBC Radio report.

While individual citizens, irrigation farmers and industries pay for water delivery, charging for actual volumes consumed has few precedents in North America. The fees charged to hydroelectric companies in Alberta are considered “rental” costs of the water used, Morrison explains.

With Canadians highlighted as the second-highest consumers of water in the world at 1,471 cubic metres per person a year, according to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development figures (the U.S. is tops at 1,870 cubic metres per person), critics point to mandatory metering as an obvious and necessary step.

However, through its voluntary metering program, cities like Calgary have only about half their homes on meters. The environment minister says he would like to mandate metering, but he can’t force municipalities to install them. Strategy document figures show municipalities use about 11 per cent of provincial water allocations.

Heinz Unger, an AWA director and a member of the Bow River Basin Council, says he’s totally incredulous the province would take more than three years to implement a pricing plan. “I have to suspect there is lack of political will.”

Meanwhile, different interpretations centre on the strategy’s failure to push protection measures for the province’s watersheds. “That bothers me a lot. If you protect your watersheds, that’s a lot of your conservation looked after,” says Unger.

When Taylor spoke at length to a recent meeting of the Bow River group, he raised a concept he called “supply-side conservation,” according to Unger. Although the minister



St. Mary's River



A prairie slough attracts many species of birds.



explained this could include dams and other storage at river headwaters or further downstream, there is little explanation of this in the strategy document.

“He let the cat out of the bag,” says Unger.

“Part of that might be Lorne’s speculation,” notes Taylor’s spokes woman, Mellesmoen. She adds, though, that while Alberta Environment has no specific storage projects in mind, “we have to consider all the options.”

She also explains watershed protection is not explicitly discussed in the strategy document “because we’re counting on the watershed management groups and stewardship groups to give us that input.”

Under the strategy, the environment minister is to name a provincial advisory council on water, along with seven committees to develop in partnership with Alberta Environment and the provincial committee strategies specific to the conditions of the seven major watersheds or river basins in Alberta. They are the Peace/Slave, Athabasca, Hay, Beaver, North Saskatchewan, South Saskatchewan and the Milk Rivers.

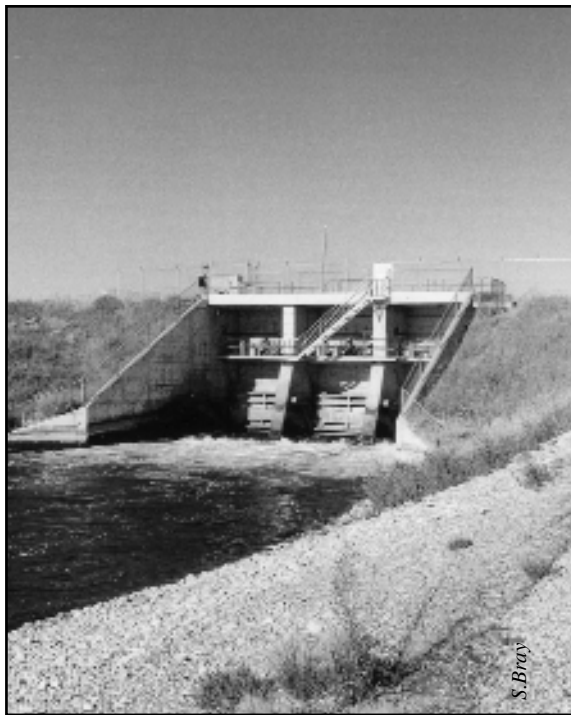
At the same time, there are plans to work with more localized watershed stewardship groups, to “raise awareness and undertake on-the-ground activities to protect and enhance local water bodies.” An estimated 40 or more of such groups are already in operation.

Unger says it’s not clear how the Bow River group will fit into this scheme. Other critics also wonder what authority and what resources they will be given to do their work.

“There is not a lot of meat to that yet,” agrees Mellesmoen. “Key aspects will start to roll out the end of February, early March after the provincial committee is appointed.”

Parkland Institute’s Acuna worries, though, the government has set a less-than-positive precedent through its health authorities and school boards. These bodies exist for the convenience of government, promoting a kind of token participation by citizens, he says. “The reality is the final authority rests with the minister whatever these groups say.”

Related to lack of watershed protection is another anomaly in



Water is diverted into an irrigation canal from the Bow River at the Carseland weir



Oldman dam and spillway

the strategy document Morrison believes environmental groups should be vigilant about. During the public consultation process, Alberta Environment literature stated there should be no clear line separating water and land environments. However, while the final strategy document discusses the virtues of healthy aquatic ecosystems, there is no mention of healthy riparian areas.

Studies are clear that extensive logging by watercourses has an impact on water flow during low-water periods, says Morrison. “It’s an incremental phenomenon, but we know from research there is a small impact on the base flow.”

Why the change? “I would bet there’s more detail to come,” replies Mellesmoen. “We had to prioritize what we could put in the strategy document.”

The new strategy’s watershed-by-watershed approach, welcomed by many observers, obviously acknowledges the dramatically different conditions across the province.

However, Taylor’s public musings about restricting water-reliant industries for the water-starved south have raised eyebrows, and the proposed 30-per-cent cut in water use has the irrigation industry on the defensive.

But, the document confirms the “first-in-time, first-in-right” approach to water licences that

entrenches the historic rights of the irrigation industry to declining water supplies. Irrigation districts virtually monopolize river allocations -- they have more than 90 per cent of the Bow, and a similar percentage of Oldman River allocations -- and the strategy does nothing to address that, says Bradley, from the Oldman advisory group.

In the meantime, Jim Byrne, director of the University of Lethbridge Water Resources Institute, warns that in 20 to 40 years, “there will be a substantial decline in available river water in the south. Major industries that have been developed based on current water supplies may be looking at substantial adjustments.”

Southern tributaries, including the St. Mary, the Belly and the Waterton Rivers, have already been closed to further allocations because of hardship conditions on their in-stream flow needs.



But, with the powerful control of groups like the St. Mary River Irrigation District over allocations, Bradley sees more conflict ahead.

She describes the call for co-operation in the strategy document a great concept, but “the co-operation of all parties is needed, otherwise we’ll find ourselves in the courts.” An appeal by the Southern Alberta Environment Group, of which Bradley is a member, to the Alberta Environment Appeal Board on the irrigation district’s refusal to transfer water rights to non-members, is the first step in what could become a legal battle over access to water.

“If environmental interests want water back in the river, they should be able to buy through the transfer process,” Bradley explains. “But, for that to happen, you need a willing transferor.” By failing to become involved, “the government is ducking its responsibility to ensuring a healthy aquatic ecosystem.”

The AWA’s Wallis also asks pointedly: “Why is Taylor handing over management of water to the St. Mary River Irrigation District?” He calls the situation “an abrogation of provincial jurisdiction to a delegated authority. It means we have less access, less control, and a focus on irrigation, not on biodiversity and in-stream flow needs.”

He is pessimistic the 30-percent water savings projected by the strategy document will free up water for biodiversity or local communities. “So, there’s no advantage to 30-percent better efficiency.”

In northern Alberta, on the other hand, the main constraint involves water quality, although quantity is a factor, too. “The lay person may think we have enormous amounts of water in our rivers,” says Mary Griffiths of the Pembina Institute. “We also have high demand on this water (from oil sands and the pulp and paper industries, for example), and we must take seasonal flows into account.”



Oldman River above dam. A Devon coalbed methane wellsite sits above the river at this site



Wapiti River, southwest of Grande Prairie, was exposed to pulp mill pollution

Griffiths says issues already raised in the Northern Rivers Basin Study include:

- Concern over oxygen levels, requirements for fish.
- Huge potential demands for water from oil sands
- In-stream flow needs of the Athabasca River.

With allocations to oil sands needs in Fort McMurray already representing 10 per cent of the river’s flow rate, the so-called Oil Sands Environmental Coalition has asked for a moratorium on further withdrawals until an In-stream Flow Needs Study has been completed.

Furthermore, with inter-basin transfers on the table for discussion, the northern rivers are still a target. “We should limit growth within a watershed to what is available. We need to live within our limits,” is Griffiths’ response.

She is co-chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Water Practice and Policy to advise the minister by March on practices that remove water from the hydrologic cycle. Because this is predominantly water for oilfield injection, the other co-chair is David Pryce from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Despite bitter opposition to water injection from groups like the Butte Action Committee, Griffiths says the industry use of

water has dropped quite dramatically in the enhanced recovery process for conventional oil. A recent Geowa Information Technologies report for Alberta Environment showed the amount of water for injection diverted from surface and ground water sources almost halved in the past 30 years.

“We see the decline continuing with more recycling of water and use of saline water,” explains Griffiths.

What is ringing alarm bells, however, is the expected soaring demand for water in steam injection or steam-assisted gravity drainage processes for bitumen recovery, particularly in the area from Cold Lake to Fort McMurray.

“They will need a lot of water,” says Griffiths. While some companies have committed to use only saline water where possible, “there’s a degree of uncertainty here. Current policy



does not require industry to look for alternatives in the province's green areas."

The committee will try to address that issue, as well as the possibility of water pricing. CAPP's Pryce has publicly stated his industry should not be singled out for pricing, but be treated the same as other water users.

A number of other issues were raised in the 54-page Water Strategy. They include:

Storage and Dams

Gary Parkstrom, Upper Bow Riverkeeper in the Mountain Parks Watershed Association, is worried by talk of water storage in high mountain areas, even though it's not part of the strategy document. Building dams is not an effective way of storing water, says Parkstrom. Evaporation occurs, and the impact on aquatic ecosystems upstream and downstream can be devastating.

The strategy does not list any specific water storage projects, says department spokeswoman Mellesmoen. However, the Milk River basin group has asked for a feasibility study for on-stream or off-stream storage. "Alberta Environment didn't drive this. The initiative came from the local community," she says.

That's downright scary, responds AWA's Wallis. Province-wide public consultation before the new Water Act in 1999 and the lead-up to the latest Water Strategy both resulted in unanimous agreement on key issues affecting biodiversity and in-stream needs.

"The government has to show leadership, not throw itself on the mercy of every local, economic interest group," he says. "We

have an agenda here from the minister."

Exports to the U.S.

Although the document puts to rest the idea of water sales south of the border, Morrison notes this legal prohibition is only as strong as the law remains. The Legislature can always change its mind. "That will never happen . . . there's no political will to change it," says Mellesmoen.

The Budget

The 10-year, \$916-million budget breaks down to: \$250 million for drinking water; \$64 million for aquatic ecosystems; \$279 million for sustainable economy initiatives; \$218 million for knowledge and research; \$81 million for partnership initiatives; \$24 million for water conservation initiatives.

Morrison calls the drinking water allocation a worthwhile expenditure, but "the money will primarily be used to fix problems that have proliferated while provincial leaders reduced spending and downloaded responsibility."

The relative size of the different expenditures -- just seven per cent for aquatic ecosystems or 2.6 per cent for water conservation, for example -- may reveal government priorities, says Unger.

Mellesmoen calls that totally unfair. Those items may not carry as high a price tag as infrastructure projects, but "they may be just as important." ❁

The Water for Life strategy and background information can be found at www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca

ALBERTANS CONCERNED ABOUT HEALTH OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PROVINCE

From: Parkland Institute News Release, Monday December 8, 2003

A report released today by the Parkland Institute finds that Albertans are very concerned about the health of democracy in the Province. Despite the fact that a majority of Albertans feel that the provincial economy is healthy, only 40 of those surveyed felt that democracy in the province was in a healthy state. The report, entitled "Trouble in Paradise? Citizens' Views on Democracy in Alberta," uses data from the 2003 Alberta Survey to examine Albertans' attitudes regarding the state of democracy in the province.

Among the report's other major findings are the following:

- a majority of Albertans feel that the environment and the education and health care systems in the province are not in a healthy state
- a majority of Albertans feel that big business and the media have too much influence on the provincial government, and that the traditional "special interest groups" like unions, environmentalists and women's groups do not
- six out of ten Albertans agree that protest groups are an important part of democracy

- four out of five Albertans favour limits on election spending, while roughly half agree with direct voting on political issues (referenda), proportional representation, and provisions for recalling elected members
- half of Albertans agree with the statement "The Alberta government hides a lot of information from the people of the province."

The report concludes by stating that it remains to be seen how this concern over Alberta's democratic deficit will play out, but that it seems that politics in Alberta may be evolving in unanticipated ways. ❁

The complete news release and executive summary can be found at www.ualberta.ca/parkland. The report is available for purchase from the Parkland Institute for \$10 plus \$2 shipping. Parkland Institute 11045 Saskatchewan Dr Edmonton AB T6G 2E1, (780) 492-8558.



MOUNTAINS AS WATERTOWERS, COMMUNITIES AS WATER STEWARDS

By Heinz Unger, AWA Director



“Real change to our natural resources,” said Jack Imhof of Trout Unlimited Canada, “will not occur until we engage those whom we normally would not associate with.” This was perhaps one of the most important statements made at the *Mountains as Watertowers* conference in Banff in November 2003. It is a suggestion we should seriously consider when we work for the protection of wilderness areas and water ecosystems in Alberta.

True to its title, the conference presented many examples and case studies that demonstrated the critical role the upper watershed, snowpack and glaciers play in supplying good water to downstream users, including humans. Another major theme of this conference was the essential role of communities and partnerships in good water management.

Water and Communities

A close group of keen and enthusiastic advocates of good water management first met on the eve of the conference in a session appropriately titled “Communities as Water Stewards”. Some 30 or 40 representatives of (E)NGOs and individuals concerned with water issues were invited and sponsored by Alberta Ecotrust, including myself, representing AWA.

This session was organized by Environment Canada’s Community Programs Section which takes an active interest in bringing groups like ours together. In addition to meeting old and new friends and enjoying artistic presentations on water and mountains, there were excellent opportunities for networking among the many local and Canadian ENGOS.

Many of the presenters addressed different aspects of the “Communities as Water Stewards” theme, such as Aaron T. Wolf, Associate Professor of Geography at Oregon State University who dealt with some of the myths of water wars over “international” water. Although he listed “Everything is OK” as possibly the biggest myth, he argued that most interaction over water issues in the past has been cooperative (Israel and its neighbours are good examples). Adequate institutional capacity to deal with change can reduce the risk of conflict and bring about an almost spiritual transformation where mutual benefits become the focus of the water debate.

Barry Worbets from the Canada West Foundation (www.cwf.ca) in Calgary concluded in his recent paper on “Western Canada’s Natural Capital” that natural capital resources such as land and water, engendered strong connections between people and communities. Disparate groups often come together in a kind of “horizontal integration” to protect and preserve important natural assets.

Another speaker ranked existential, aesthetic and

environmental values of water well above the economic side. Margaret Catley-Carlson from the Global Water Partnership spoke about global talks and water partnerships that bring about local alliances and solutions (www.gwpforum.org).

Good News Stories

Josh Smienk of the Columbia Basin Trust and Graeme Enders of Snowy River Recovery (Australia) had real good news stories to tell, possibly because the people in these two river basins had followed the above advice. In 1995, Columbia Basin residents had negotiated with the government of B.C. to create the Columbia Basin Trust which deals with the impacts of the 1964 Columbia River Treaty. It distributes ongoing benefits of the Columbia dams to communities and the environment, including water management (www.cbt.org).



Lake Minnewanka, Banff National Park

The Snowy River Recovery is in the process of restoring environmental flows from savings in irrigation diversions obtained through more efficient water use. Over a 10-year period flows will be increased to over 20% of the average annual normal flow - returning a “debt to the river”. This will also give back some of the amenities of a healthy river to the riparian communities, and it is expected that such an ecological investment can generate considerable social and economic benefits.

Snowy River authorities will carry out flow response monitoring to assess conditions before and after the environmental flows. This restoration initiative is of major interest to southern Alberta where Alberta Environment, assisted by basin advisory committees, is currently struggling to determine in-stream flow needs and establish water conservation objectives. Ecological in-stream flow needs have been impossible to meet in southern Alberta due to the over-allocation of water, mainly for irrigation.



Water and Mountains

Hans Schreier from the Institute for Resources and Environment at the University of British Columbia spoke about water as an environmental service. He stressed the importance of maintaining good soil cover especially in the upper watershed to maximize infiltration and thereby the storage of water in soils. But he also emphasized the need for good communication and cooperation in order to effect real change: "Together we can move mountains and keep the water flowing."

Although drawing mainly on his research of cloud forests, Larry Hamilton, an environmental consultant from Vermont, concluded from his research that mountain forests are the guarantors of the safest and best quality water over the long term; in addition, they also provide flood protection.

Chris Frissell of the Pacific Rivers Council and Rob Ament of American Wildlands in Montana presented their ongoing research on "Landscape management and water in the Y2Y region" as a case study. Their work's focus is Montana, but many of the issues and findings would appear to be applicable to Alberta's Eastern Slopes as well – except that Canada and Alberta have fewer legal instruments for protecting natural water resources.

Chris and Rob found that there are more declining and endangered species in freshwater than in terrestrial systems, mainly due to deteriorating water quality and flows, invasion of non-native species and land (ab)use. Their early conclusions stress the importance of land-water linkages whose integrity needs to be protected or restored, in accordance with their motto "Protect the best, restore the rest".

They also found that in the US, there are adequate Federal regulations and laws that can be applied to protect water systems under various designations, such as "Wild and Scenic Rivers". Montana State can designate a river or water body as an "Outstanding Resource Water (ORW)", and they can also impose "Forest Travel Management Plans" to determine which roads should be closed since it has been found that the loss of "naturalness" of an area is mostly irreversible.

One more interesting observation from this research is that generally there are more threats to public lands through grazing, oil and gas exploration and production, logging and mining. Privately owned lands are generally better managed and less at risk.

New Directions

Dr. David Schindler of the University of Alberta was one of the highlights of the conference, and his presentation focused on the indirect impacts of climate change, such as deteriorating water quality, ignorance of the

interconnectedness of surface and groundwater, and nutrient releases into water bodies from fertilizer and intensive livestock operations (ILOs). He estimates that phosphorous and nitrogen released from cattle and hog operations in Alberta are equivalent to a nutrient load produced by about 87 million people.

Schindler stressed the need for a Federal water policy with enforceable standards, a separate wetlands policy, a new emphasis to use science in the federal and provincial government decision-making, more interaction between universities and the general public, and, as a result, citizen-inspired efforts in water resources management.

In her talk about the 20-year horizon needed for integrated watershed management, Isobel Heathcote, co-chair of the Canada-US International Joint Commission's Science Advisory Board, stressed the need for dialogue, compromise and processes for conflict resolution. To supplement the people-based approaches, she called for "hierarchical monitoring" that uses real-time data acquisition for remote areas where ecosystem changes are detected, then compared to set indicators, which, if necessary, would trigger detailed studies of affected areas.

Fred Wrona of the National Water Research Institute (NWRI), when discussing climate change impacts on mountain water systems, also called for more long-term monitoring and data collection to help formulate adaptive water management strategies. Wrona and several other speakers dealt with the changing flow regimes when glacial or nival (snowmelt) systems shift to pluvial systems with increasing maximum flows and floods, while average and minimum flows decrease, so much so that in some rivers releases from hydro dams may have to be considered to assist downstream areas in dry years in order to achieve dilution flows.

One of the last presentations was by W. Jewell of Cornell University who suggested that we use the "changing toolbox" of e-governance to strengthen the public voice and facilitate dialogue, such as websites, online data viewing, and other cyber tools. He sees a need for more consensus-based, rather than science-based, solutions to arrive at a common vision. Jewell ended his talk with a still relevant quote from Bruce Bishop (1970) who said, "Water resource planning is not just a framework for decision-making, it is a tool for social change." 🍂

(The community participation, "Communities as Water Stewards", was made possible through the support of the Community Animation Program for Alberta that Environment Canada & Health Canada jointly manage.)

"Water resource planning is not just a framework for decision-making, it is a tool for social change."



IF YOU'RE NOT OUTRAGED, YOU'RE NOT A TRUE OPTIMIST

By Jim Stiles



A couple of weeks ago, I was chatting with a cheery woman I love to be around. She's an artist, still a diehard Ralph Naderite, and a dedicated organic gardener. But one day, when I was ranting about some ongoing environmental disaster or another, she stood up in her broccoli patch, gave me a withering look and stuck her fingers in her ears.

"Please stop," she said earnestly. "I can't listen to this anymore. You environmentalists are just too negative for me to bear!"

Negative? Me? "You'll never believe this," I told her, "But I am an optimist." After she'd finished laughing and caught her breath, I attempted to explain myself.

"Look," I said. "Do you know what I think is one of the most significant characteristics of an optimistic person?" She shook her head.

"Outrage," I told her. "Controlled and properly applied outrage."

My friend uncomfortably shifted from foot to foot. "What in the world are you talking about?" she asked.

"Okay ... stay with me a minute. Do you mind if I sit down?"

Now she was really worried. "How long is this going to take?"

"Not long. You'll be out of here by noon."

"But it's only nine-thirty!"

"Okay ... eleven. Please listen to me. In this crazed world of ours, when we see something happening around us that we think is wrong - whether it's trying to govern foreign countries that don't want us or killing endangered species to save them - we have two choices: We can either act to change events, or we can simply accept what's happening and prepare for the consequences.

"Only by being outraged will any of us make the effort or take the time to do the right thing. Outrage led to the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation and Women's Suffrage and the Civil Rights Act. Outrage created the Wilderness Act and the Clean Air Act. It was when people got mad enough that change occurred."

My friend sighed and sat down next to me. "I see your point, but I just can't stand all the pessimism that comes from environmentalists like you. It never stops."

"That's not true and you know it," I said defensively. "First of all, you know that environmentalists can be some of the silliest and dopiest people that ever had the nerve to reproduce. We provide all kinds of comic relief to break the grimness. I mean ... good grief...look at the Sierra Club.

"But second, and much more importantly, do you want me to tell you what a real pessimist sounds like?" I challenged.

"Uh ... not really," she replied.

"OK, I'll tell you anyway. My idea of a pessimist is somebody who hears about a new sight-seeing tram in Moab, Utah, or another gated community in Montana or Oregon, or

another bonehead move by a Wyoming congressman and hears the outrage from others and puts his hands over his ears and says, 'This is all so NEGATIVE. I think this kind of negative energy is really sad. I can find such happiness in my organic garden and taking hikes with my friends and just living. I mean, I recycle! Why can't you people just be happy? You can't stop any of this anyway, so, like, why make yourself miserable?'

"Now that is a pessimistic person ... someone in such denial that they refuse to acknowledge the reality around them, and the responsibility to defend the very things that they allegedly find most precious in their lives. It's stumbling through life with blinders on. It's ignoring the obvious. It's outrageous and hypocritical to boot!" I was on a roll.

"On the other hand, someone who is outraged enough to act believes that things can get better. That positive change is possible. That it's worth the screaming and elevated blood pressure to see something through to its conclusion, win or lose."

"I never say 'like' in a sentence," she said, glaring.

"My friend, I'm not even talking about you. Your grasp of the English language is to be commended and I know you have a great passion for right and wrong. I was creating a hyperbolic and stereotypical generalization to make a point. Just don't assume that outrage is a bad thing."

"So the bottom line," she said, "is that you're a positive, upbeat optimist because you're constantly outraged and frustrated, and if the world were similarly infuriated, the world would be a better place to live?"

"Something like that."

"Nobody will ever believe it."

"Probably not." 🍂

(Jim Stiles edits the Canyon Country Zephyr in Moab, Utah. This article was published as a column for Writers on the Range, a syndicated service of High Country News, August 18, 2003. To see their current columns and archives, visit. Republished with permission.)

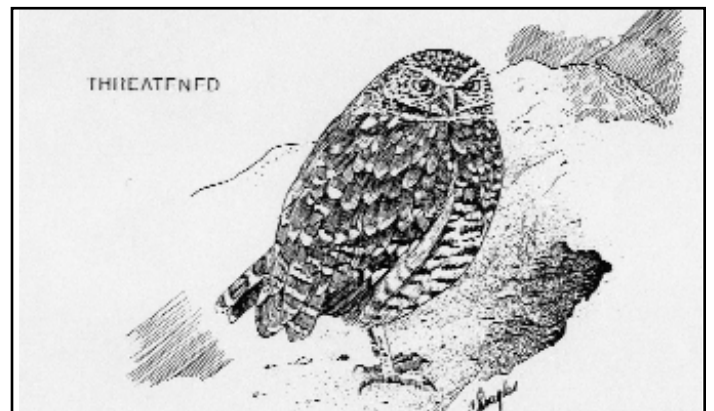


Illustration by Charles Douglas, reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada



ALBERTA WILDERNESS WATCH

DEATH STALKS THE LIVINGSTONE

By David McIntyre

The Livingstone Range commands the skyline for thousands of southwestern Alberta residents. This knife-edged range is one of the province's most photographed features—a pinnacled icon that generates a towering sense of pride and place for the region's ranching populace. The name "Livingstone" is symbolic of a cherished landscape and a way of life.

The quiet roadways that touch the southern Livingstone's sunlit flanks are among Canada's most scenic byways. They are known around the world for their stunning views and ability to showcase the region's conspicuous wildlife. Nowhere else in North America has nature created a landscape that yields such an abundance of diverse large mammal species! Here, you can stand in one spot and see mountain goats, dozens of bighorn sheep, herds of elk, concentrations of moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer and a full-ecologically intact-range of native carnivores and omnivores.



D. McIntyre

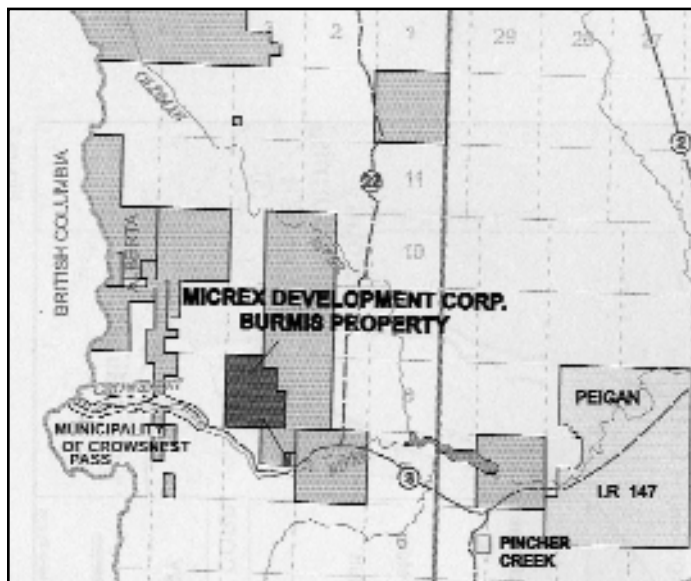
Looking northwest across the northern reaches of the proposed strip mine toward Centre Peak, highest point on the Livingstone Range

The only blemish on this pristine picture: a geological curiosity created within the shifting sands of the late Cretaceous. That's when a thin layer of beach sand was deposited on the shore of an ancient sea. This sand—now rock—contains magnetite (a magnetic iron ore used to process coal).

A small BC-based company stands poised to excavate this prehistoric beachfront property in order to save BC coal mines an estimated 1.5 to 2 cents/tonne in the production of coal. The company has purchased mineral rights (from the Government of Alberta) in order to mine a portion of public land that measures approximately 2.5 km by 13 km. The targeted area extends north-along the eastern face of the Livingstone Range—from Highway 3, near the Burmis Tree (a limber pine, Canada's most photographed tree), toward Centre

Peak, highest peak in the mountain range.

The company's vision: a huge strip mine and processing plant (created within a lambing area used by nearly 200 bighorn sheep); colossal water diversion from one, or more, cutthroat trout streams (each a tributary of the internationally acclaimed trout fishery on the Crowsnest River); and a transportation plan that would transform a quiet country road into a dusty haul road.



Property location of Burmis Magnetite Project
(from: Micrex Development Corp. Disclosure Document, 2002)

Magnetite has modest industrial value, and geologists have scrutinized the Livingstone's exposed beach deposits for much of the past century. Scientists still visit the site. Most are simply intrigued with the geological anomaly. They continue to question the economic value of these thin magnetite deposits, a limitation that is exacerbated by the fact that they dip into the steep eastern face of the mountain range, where the cost of excavation is clearly prohibitive.

The most damaging aspect of mining the Livingstone's ancient beachfront property involves the miner's need to "chase" the thin ore reserves across broad expanses of land. This recovery strategy, costly and inefficient, would be undesirable anywhere. It would be particularly devastating to the exceptionally productive and treasured ecological resources of the south Livingstone, where phenomenally rich, rough fescue grasslands support a viable ranching community and habitat that is critical to an astonishing number of key wildlife species.

To sanction a huge strip mine within this cherished landscape would appear to be a last-ditch stand made by an



impoverished government. The damage is magnified when it is known that mining the Livingstone landscape would destroy the intrinsic values associated with its wildlife and grazing land, its ranching economy, its real estate and thousands of Alberta's oldest and most picturesque limber pines.

Within the proposed project's zone of impact are the water rights of downstream ranches and the lives and homes of people who don't wish to see quiet sunrises and peaceful nights replaced with the deafening scream of an industrial generator, clouds of dust and campaigns of intense trucking.

(Some local ranchers are already experiencing water problems that are unprecedented within the memories of the valley's oldest residents.)

More than one hundred residents living within the greater footprint of the proposed strip mine joined together recently to express their outrage and opposition. This group, the Friends of the Livingstone Association, exhibiting an exceptional show of united-cross-societal-force, formed for the sole purpose of defeating the proposal and its potential to deliver devastating impact on their lives, the landscape and the existing economy of the region. 🍁

Burmis Magnetite Mine and Livingstone Range Facts

- More than 30 square kilometres (3000 hectares, or 7400 acres) of public lands located on the eastern slopes of the Livingstone Range have been targeted by a company that has plans to operate a strip mine and build a processing plant to recover the region's magnetite.
- Magnetite is a magnetic iron ore that is used to process coal.
- The area proposed for this project extends-along the eastern slopes of the Livingstone Range-from Highway 3 (near the Burmis Tree, Canada's most photographed tree) to a point approximately 13 km north of Highway 3.
- There is a provincially recognized Environmentally Significant Area, called Connelly Creek Ridges, within the mine site and vicinity. This is a montane region with the most extensive limber pine stand in Alberta. No assessment of impact on this ESA has been conducted.
- It is estimated that this proposed mine would enable BC coal companies to save 1.5 to 2 cents/tonne in their production of coal.
- The proposed magnetite mine would appear to offer no economic benefit to Alberta. In fact, the proposed heavy-truck traffic would create costs, generate extreme safety hazards and destroy, or threaten, the area's existing economic base.
- The area proposed for the magnetite mine contains North America's largest concentration of diverse large mammal species, including one of Alberta's most significant populations of bighorn sheep and wintering moose. White-tailed deer, mule deer, large herds of elk and lesser numbers of mountain goats, cougars, wolves, black bears and grizzly bears also live within the area. No field survey of wildlife or detailed assessment of impacts of the mine on plant and animal populations has been conducted.
- High quality, low volume creeks in the region are home to cutthroat trout. The mine's proponents expect to use large quantities of water, taking it from the headwaters of one or more of these creeks.
- Southwestern Alberta has a concentration of rare plant species, yet no rare plant survey has been done for the project.
- The proposed project's proponents have stated that they intend to open a "small quarry." It's clear from their full proposal, however, that they plan to mine-north and south-from their first footprint, to eventually strip mine the entire (13km) deposit.
- A significant number of Alberta ranching families, and other residents, live downstream from the proposed mine and processing facility. These people would be affected by heavy truck traffic; thousands of truck-trips are projected to occur during "campaigns" of intense activity.
- The mine would cause Alberta to lose the aesthetic appeal of one of its most treasured landscapes.
- The proposed project has generated broadband outrage: ranchers have joined forces with a diverse cross-section of society to safeguard a way of life and protect existing heritage values.



LOGGING OF BAR C LEASE LANDS MOBILIZES LOCAL COMMUNITY

By Heinz Unger, AWA Director



November 17, 2003 saw the first of a series of heated community meetings at Beaupre Hall on Highway #40, 15km west of Cochrane. Local residents of the Ghost Valley and the Waiparous Creek area expressed their concerns and objections to the proposed logging plan, spread over about 7,000 acres of grazing lease lands managed by the Bar C Ranch on Highway 340.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), represented by Rick Blackwood, Manager Southern Rockies, had held a public meeting in September 2003 where Ken Birkett of Trees Consulting had explained that the cutting plan would involve some clear and some partial cutting, using mechanical equipment. However, that “public” meeting had been so poorly advertised that only six or seven people turned up, at least two of whom were the small sawmill owners awarded this contract by SRD.

SRD subsequently explained in local newspaper interviews that this logging was the last part of a 1986 (!) forestry management plan for the Ghost-Waiparous area; that no other suitable areas were available for logging this year; and also that there was a pine dwarf mistletoe infestation in some of the stands. Interestingly, the specialist on pine dwarf mistletoe infestation at the December 3 meeting, was only able to find healthy pine – which he displayed.

The real reason seems to be poor planning on the part of SRD, and the fact that Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS) huge FMA area forced the local small quota holders onto marginal woodlands, like the Bar C lease lands. The writer understood from the forestry consultant that the sawmills were not happy to work in this area because of the long distance they will have to haul the timber to their sawmills in the Water Valley area.

A second meeting of some 50 Ghost Valley residents took place on November 27, and Bar C had mobilized forestry experts and legal advice to fight the proposed plans or seek their modification. Community members had many questions and concerns, and also a number of suggestions on how to address the local concerns. People felt that there would be unacceptable impacts on the local community, the

economy and the environment.

By then SRD had scheduled a second “open house” for December 3, to give everybody an opportunity to review the proposed Preliminary Harvest Plan (PHP). The four local sawmill owners, SRD staff and consultants, a number of Alberta United Recreationist Society (AURS) members, representing off-road vehicle owners – who, interestingly enough, sided rather vocally with the sawmill owners and with SRD staff – and about 70 local people turned out for the open house.

There was a good cross section of the community, with people from all sectors, including oil & gas, professionals, the local councilor from the MD of Bighorn (who is very active and supportive in this matter), and two directors from AWA. Area ranchers and outfitters were notable by their absence, which could well be explained by a reluctance to be seen as opposing SRD, on whom many of them depend for grazing leases.

The media from Cochrane and Calgary were also in attendance. They captured how some vocal locals turned the SRD planned information session (with booths, wall charts, and a few exhibitors to explain

their views to the public) into an open debate of the merits of logging the Bar C lease lands.

Many people were not opposed to any logging at all – in fact, Lawrence Cowan of the Bar C Ranch, offered to horse-log 25% of the area but his offer was rejected by SRD. The community was mainly concerned with the “Hows”, i.e. clear-cutting, especially in the vicinity of the local water courses, the Ghost River and Waiparous Creek. While SRD’s Rick Blackwood maintained that the cutting plan was fully in accordance with the forestry management, he refused to accept that the 1986 plan for the area was woefully out of date, and they were following the timber harvesting “ground rules” in force in Alberta. It was clear to most of those present, that the management plan and the ground rules were inappropriate for this area.

Rick suggested speaking to politicians to change the rules, but despite several attempts by a number of people, there was no reaction or response from Janis Tarchuk, the MLA for the Banff-Cochrane constituency. In the end, people could only



Clearcutting up Waiparous Creek in previous years



note their concerns and suggestions in forms collected by the consultant. SRD promised that any necessary modification would be made prior to the plan's submission, review and approval.

It now appears that the Ghost Valley community may have lost a battle, but not necessarily the war. The harvesting plan was approved on January 6, 2004 by SRD – with minor changes - and on January 15 heavy mechanical equipment moved into the area to clear access tracks along the Transalta Road in the vicinity of Leseur Creek, just west of Highway # 40.

Bar C Ranch is continuing the fight and seeking a court injunction to stop the logging. Valley residents met on January 22 to reactivate the Ghost Watershed Alliance (GWA). They want GWA to become a respected stewardship group. They also want GWA to be a strong presence in the area, an entity

that must be consulted by government, industry or others when carrying out activities that impact the local water resources and environment. ❁

On Tuesday February 10, 2004 the Alberta Court of Appeal granted an Injunction to the Bar C Ranch and Cattle Company Ltd. Preventing any further felling of trees on Bar C lands pending a further hearing of the Court.

The Injunction was granted after representation by Bar C that any continued logging was detrimental to the tourist and grazing operation of the Ranch. To the Knowledge of Bar C's lawyers, Docken & Company. This is the first time an injunction against logging has been granted by an Alberta Court.

RECREATION DAMAGE IMPACTS BIGHORN WILDLAND

By Lara Smandych, AWA Conservation Biologist



Recreational activities are continuing to cause environmental damage in the Bighorn Wildland according to the results from the first year of AWA's Bighorn Recreation and Impact Monitoring Project. In spite of the Forest Land Use Zones that were implemented in the Bighorn Wildland in 2002, the study documented illegal OHV off trail and out of season use, and severe damage to both trail structure and vegetation from both motorized and non-motorized recreation.

The growing threat to landscape integrity due to human use, particularly motorized use, is widespread and well documented. Historically, the Alberta Eastern Slopes Policy that prohibits motorized recreation in the Prime Protection zone has protected much of the Bighorn. However, this policy was poorly enforced. In 2002 the government legalized motorized recreation in the Bighorn Wildland on designated trails with the implementation of their newest management strategy, Forest Land Use Zones. Trail monitoring is therefore crucial within the Bighorn Wildland to identify local physical and environmental impacts on the landscape, identify illegal off trail or out-of-season use by recreationists, and understanding the impacts of recreational activities.

Project Overview

The Bighorn Recreation Use and Impact Monitoring Project was designed to identify and assess the current status

of recreational activity in the Bighorn Wildland and document the effects that these activities are having on the landscape. The monitoring project study area is located within the Bighorn Wildland's Upper Clearwater/Ram Forest Land Use Zone (see our web site for map). Over the years, this particular area has become highly utilized by motorized recreationists and is also a favourite area for horse use. The project consisted of collecting data on trail condition as well on OHV use along selected trails. We collected data and mapped 50 kilometres of trail, over which we established approximately 90 sites and collected data from 7 TRAFx counters.

OHV activity is popular in the area and makes the most visible impact on the ground. Monitoring identifies where this particular activity is occurring, the intensity of use and the impacts of their use. TRAFx counters were used to record and monitor the number of passes made by OHVs along selected legal designated and illegal non-designated trails. A designated trail is defined as a trail that legally allows specified activities at specified times of the year. A non-designated trail is a trail where specified activities are illegal at all times.

It is anticipated that during the four years of this study, correlations may be made between the intensity of trail use and the physical condition of the trails. Because the 2003 season was the first field season for the monitoring project, the data collected will serve as baseline results in which to compare data collected from the next 3 years of the project.



Aerial Surveys

Damage seen on the ground was substantiated through aerial surveys undertaken last year. The scarring left on the landscape can clearly be seen from the air. This technique of monitoring gives a bigger picture of the entire area and can help to pinpoint where hotspots of activity or inactivity and damage or no damage are occurring. AWA will continue with aerial surveys of recreational use during the next year.

Trail Condition

We collected data on trail condition including trail slope, width, recreational use type, and the structural and vegetation damage along the trails to help assess the pattern, intensity, and extent of recreational use in the area. Data was collected for both systematic and random sites. A systematic site is a portion of trail selected for repeated monthly data sampling. Random sites of damage target randomly created damage on and off trail outside of a systematic site.

A total of 69 systematic sites on both designated and non-designated trails were selected for monitoring of trail condition. A total of 22 random sites were also surveyed on designated and non-designated trails along the trail network.

The most telling measures of trail condition were those measuring the degree of structural and vegetation damage. Structural damage is a measure to indicate the integrity and level of degradation of the trail. Similarly, vegetation damage indicates the intensity of use of the trail through the presence and absence of vegetation. Structural and vegetation damage can be caused by a high level of use of the trails that can lead to the presence of rutted features, the removal of vegetation and the scarring of the landscape.

It was determined that 48% of systematic and random sites suffer Moderate/Severe to Severe level of structural damage. Similarly, it was found that 86% of systematic and random sites exhibit Moderate/Severe to Severe level of vegetation damage.

OHV Use

A total of 1395 passes made by OHVs were recorded by the 7 TRAFx counters over a six months period. The number of monthly passes were as follows:

June	38
July	267
August	629
September	214
October	221

These numbers illustrate the intensity of use by OHVs on samples of both designated (legal) and non-designated (illegal) trails. The results show that the greatest number of passes were recorded in the month of August. This may be due to weather and/or the onset of hunting season.

The majority of the passes counted were recorded on the legal, designated trail. Of the 1395 passes, a total of 886 legal, in season and on-trail passes were recorded. In total, 509 illegal (out of season and/or off trail) counts were recorded. Results also show that a total of 669 passes were made on weekends, while 726 were made on weekdays. Both legal and illegal use was recorded on weekends and weekdays.

Although the majority of the counts recorded occurred on a legal designated trail, the number of illegal counts cannot be dismissed. Non-designated trails must not to be used for motorized recreational activity. Therefore these trails, including areas adjacent to trails, and stream crossings should not be experiencing any illegal use. What the data shows is that not only is illegal use occurring out of designated seasons, but is occurring off trail. Because illegal activity is also occurring off trail, SRD officers must patrol off trail areas to enforce regulations and catch those who are non compliant. The

amount of illegal use may be due in part to poor signage in the area in terms of their message, number, location, and size.

Although this was the first year of study, a few inferences can be made between trail condition and OHV use. We expected that non-designated trails, which should be free from OHV activity, would be in a relatively pristine form. Results



Example of severe rutting



Tree root damage caused by excessive horse use



show that despite non-designated trails experiencing far fewer passes by OHVs than designated trails, the degree of structural and vegetation damage recorded indicate a high level of severity. These findings are consistent with the literature, which found a direct relationship between the number of OHV passes over the same area and the degree of vegetation damage. In one study up to 99% of vegetation loss resulted after only 32 passes by OHVs.

Equestrian Use

The Bighorn Wildland is a popular destination for equestrian enthusiasts and, although recognized as a traditional backcountry activity, the impacts of horse use on the environment are a concern for backcountry managers. The ecological impacts we observed from horse use included deep trail ruts, soil compaction, devegetation, and stream erosion.

Structural damage to trails in the form of soil erosion and deep rutting was observed. Horse trails are unique in that they tend to be quite narrow and deep, depending on factors such as soil characteristics and moisture. In some trails in the study area, depths of 28 cm were measured. Trampling by horses has compacted the soil and has led to the complete removal of vegetation (severe vegetation damage). Similar damage in



Example of deep equestrian trail in Bighorn

terms of devegetation, trampling and erosion was also recorded along stream edges.

During AWA's Historic Bighorn Maintenance trip in the Wapiabi, severe erosion, weed infestation and devegetation were noted during cleanup efforts of degraded horse camps.

AWA sent documentation of the damage to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, which subsequently closed the camp.

Conclusion

The results of our work will make a difference in enforcement and the long-term management of wilderness throughout Alberta. A few months ago, I had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, Mike

Cardinal, and many Alberta MLA's to discuss Bighorn management issues and AWA's recreation trail monitoring. I have also met with SRD staff to coordinate protective monitoring efforts in the Bighorn Wildland.

AWA will be starting the 2004 Bighorn Monitoring Field Season in May 2004. We are always looking for enthusiastic and experienced volunteers. To find out more about the 2003 results or, if you would like to participate in 2004, please contact Lara at the AWA office, 283-2025.

CHEVIOT MINE TO OPEN?

According to Jim Gardiner, President of the Fording Canadian Coal Trust, Fording's board will soon look at approving the Cheviot Mine project. "Based on our current and anticipated market conditions for our coal product we are evaluating expansion projects," said Gardiner in a conference call with investors and media, February 3. "Additional capital spending related to increasing our capacity for coal production is possible for 2004. I have a list of projects under consideration such as extending the life of our Cardinal River property by moving to the Cheviot Creek pit." Fording already has most of the permits it needs for Cheviot, and hopes to get operating licenses from the provincial government by mid year. That would allow the mine to be selling coal by the fourth quarter of 2004. To hear the conference call, visit www.fording.ca.



Illustrations by Charles Douglas, reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada



PUBLIC INTEREST UPHELD IN WHALEBACK DECISION

By Shirley Bray, Editor



In one of its strongest decisions, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) denied applications by Polaris Resources Ltd. to drill for critical sour gas on the borders of the newly protected areas of the Whaleback.

AWA commended the EUB for this decision that recognized the particular care we must take with the unique ecosystem of the Whaleback, including lands adjacent to the protected areas. AWA was pleased to see that the decision included concerns about the lack of effective public consultation, the poor well site location, and the inadequacies in the assessment and mitigations of environmental impacts, such as effects on rare plants, wildlife, and water.

In its decision, the EUB had to determine whether the well application would be in the public interest. AWA commissioned an opinion poll by Dunvegan Group to help determine the public interest. Sixty-seven percent of those polled were opposed to the development, indicating that the Alberta public clearly felt that it would not be in the public interest to drill for sour gas on lands adjacent to the Whaleback protected areas.



An aerial view of the Whaleback, Fall 2003

Although the EUB is leaving the door open for further applications for drilling in this location, Premier Klein promised in 1999 that this area would remain free of oil and gas development. AWA believes that commitment must be kept. In April the leases held by the Nature Conservancy in the property adjoining that held by Polaris will expire. AWA hopes that the government will not allow these leases to be sold but will keep them protected from development in perpetuity as originally intended when they were donated by Amoco.

The EUB's decision (2003-101) can be found on our website in the Whaleback archive. 🌿

From: EUB Decision 2003-101, Conclusion

In considering whether to grant the well licence, the Board must return to the initial question: Can this well be drilled by this applicant in this location at this time in a manner consistent with the public interest? After a careful review of all the evidence, the Board has concluded that it must deny the well licence application.

First the Board repeats that the need for the well is solely to provide information. To grant the application, the Board would have to be satisfied that the well's inherent risks to the environment and the public, were sufficiently mitigated as to not outweigh the benefits for the well. The evidence set out above has not provided that measure of satisfaction in this matter. The Board's conclusion is based on the following:

- the inadequacies identified in Polaris's drilling plan;
- the overall failure of Polaris to engage in an effective plan of consultation and communication, which not only hampered its initial dealings with local residents but caused serious doubt as to Polaris's ability to properly consult and communicate on an ongoing basis, thereby undermining its ability to implement many of its plans for mitigation;
- the inadequacies in Polaris's assessment and mitigations of environmental impacts;
- the inadequacies of Polaris's development plan;
- the inadequacies in Polaris's emergency response plan; and
- the lack of a coherent management plan that would outline how Polaris would be able to deal with the eventualities of a project of this magnitude in light of its size and Polaris's lack of experience coupled with its own lack of resources.

In light of these considerations, collectively the Board is of the view that it cannot in the public interest grant the application. However, the Board must emphasize that any future application would be considered on its own merits and that this decision should not be perceived as necessarily excluding resource development in this area.



Illustrations by Charles Douglas, reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada



MINISTER INGNORES SCIENCE TO OK SPRING GRIZZLY BEAR HUNT

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator



On February 2, 2004 Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), Mike Cardinal announced that grizzly bears will once again be hunted this spring. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) has consistently argued that any decisions affecting Alberta's grizzly population should be based on sound science. This

decision has failed to do so.

The decision to continue with a spring hunt has been made despite overwhelming scientific evidence that Alberta's grizzlies are in serious trouble. SRD's Grizzly Bear Recovery Team has called for a postponement to the hunt. The government's Endangered Species Conservation Committee has also recommended that the grizzly should be declared a 'threatened' species (which would lead to an automatic suspension of the hunt).

The announcement will allow for 73 hunting licences to be issued – down from 101 last year. But last year's reduction

(from 130 licences the previous year) led to an increase in the number of bears killed. In spring 2003, 18 bears were killed during the spring hunt, the second highest number in a decade. As access into grizzly bear habitat continues to increase, so it becomes easier to hunt bears. Decreases in the number of hunters are outweighed by an increase in the ease of access.

The spring grizzly hunt is not an issue of hunters versus conservationists. Many hunters consider themselves as conservationists, or "stewards" of our wild spaces. Many of AWA's supporters are keen hunters, who recognize that the grizzly hunt cannot continue if population levels are too low to sustain it.

The real worry is that a number of serious measures need to be adopted if we are not going to lose Alberta's grizzly bears completely. Suspending the spring hunt would be the first small, relatively simple measure. If we can't take even this relatively easy step, then it does not bode well for the major battles that are still to come. ❁

CLARIFICATION OF GRIZZLY BEAR STATUS

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

'Threatened', 'endangered', 'red list', 'blue list', 'species at risk'... There is a confusing variety of endangered species designations, depending on whether one is looking at provincial, federal or international criteria. Alberta's grizzly bears fall within a number of different categories.

International Status

In the grizzly article in the December 2003 edition of *Wild Lands Advocate* reference was made to World Conservation Union (IUCN) population guidelines. The IUCN Red List suggests that a population of 1000 mature individuals would be listed as 'vulnerable' and would therefore be "considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild".

It should be emphasized however that IUCN criteria refer to global populations and not regional populations. Alberta's grizzly bears, although they are relatively isolated geographically by the Continental Divide, and fragmented by man-made barriers such as the TransCanada Highway and Highway 3 through the Crowsnest Pass, do not count as a distinct population as defined by IUCN. The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria can be viewed at www.redlist.org/info/categories_criteria.html. Thank you to Chris Shank for his comments.

Provincial Status

In 2000, the provincial government's *The General Status of Alberta's Wild Species* (http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/status/2000/2000_General_Status_Species_Rpt.pdf), defined grizzlies as: **May be at Risk** ("May be at risk of extirpation but may require special attention or protection to prevent it from becoming at risk.")

In 2000 the government's Endangered Species Sub Committee recommended to Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, that the grizzly should be a 'threatened' species.

These reports, however, were both derived from outdated population estimates, which put the population at around 1000 individuals. Last year's *Report on Alberta Grizzly Bear Assessment and Allocation* (www.AlbertaWilderness.ca) revised this figure down to 500 individuals on provincial land, with a further 185 in the National Parks.

National Status

The new *Federal Species at Risk Act 2003* (www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca) defines the grizzly bear (northwestern population) as: "Special Concern, on Schedule 3; pending public consultation for addition to Schedule 1".

- **Special concern species:** a wildlife species that may become a threatened or an endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.
- **Schedule 1:** is the official list of species that are classified as extirpated, endangered, threatened, and of special concern.

Whatever criteria you use, it remains certain that the situation for grizzly bears in Alberta is serious. If nothing is done to address the fundamental problems of habitat destruction and fragmentation, then the situation is only going to continue to get worse. ❁



CONCERNS OVER CONTINUED HIGHWAY TWINNING THROUGH BANFF

By Nigel Douglas, AWA Outreach Coordinator

Plans are currently in the pipeline to twin the remaining sections of the TransCanada Highway in Banff National Park. A 33.5 km section between Castle Junction and the BC border is still a two lane highway, and Parks Canada is proposing to twin some or all of this section under Phase 3B of the twinning process.

At the recent Banff planning forum, the first two stated project goals, were to:

- Improve motorist safety
- Reduce wildlife-traffic conflicts, thereby bringing about environmental improvements

AWA has argued that there are more effective and much cheaper ways of achieving these two goals than by twinning the highway. Lack of enforcement of speed limits on the highway means that the average speed of travel on the highway is considerably higher than the road can sustain. If motorist safety is the primary aim of the project, then proper enforcement of speed limits (by extensive use of photo radar for example) would have the desired effect at a fraction of the cost. However, it appears that the third project goal – to *increase efficient movement of people and goods* - is in fact the primary goal of the process.

Parks Canada has the responsibility to manage parks in an environmentally sensitive manner and it is vital that this highway-engineering project reflect this responsibility. The Canada National Parks Act (1997) states: "*Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of*

natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks." Yet this priority doesn't factor in as one of the project goals.

Previous phases of the highway twinning have had little success in dealing with the problems of fragmentation of wildlife populations. Movements such as the Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) Conservation Initiative have recognized for many years that highways act as major barriers to wildlife movement and are sources of wildlife mortality. Past mitigation measures have generally been adopted as an afterthought and have failed to address adequately the underlying problems. Recent research by scientists such as Dr. Shelley Alexander indicates that reduced connectivity over time has the same effect as direct mortality.

If mitigation measures are going to have any effect, they need to be built into the design of the project at an early stage. Raising of extended sections of highway, wildlife underpasses, and extended bridges to allow

wildlife movement along river corridors are all measures which must be fundamental to the highway design.

If this means that the project will be more expensive than a highway anywhere else, then that is as it should be: this is after all one of the country's premier National Parks. Maintenance of ecological integrity is still the primary objective of national park management, and this should not be lost in the highway-building frenzy that has dominated previous projects. 🍁



Highway underpass for wildlife along TransCanada Highway in Banff National Park

MILK RIVER - A HOTSPOT OF BIODIVERSITY

By Cheryl Bradley

The Milk River Basin has a high number of species at risk, 46 in total, in a relatively small area. Because of this concentration it has been chosen as the first provincial project for planning multi-species conservation at the landscape level (MULTISAR). This is a joint project of Alberta Fish and Wildlife and the Alberta Conservation Association. Studies are underway to identify key habitats for species at risk, evaluate land use and recommend beneficial management practices. Landowners are invited to participate in establishing stewardship goals and activities. For more info call 382-4364.

Alberta Species at Risk Report No. 72: *A Multi-Species Conservation Strategy for Species at Risk in the Milk River Basin: Year 1 – Progress Report* can be seen in pdf format at www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/riskspecies.

The final report for the Milk River dam and diversions was completed at the end of December 2003. The Environment Minister, Lorne Taylor, is away until about mid-February and has not had the opportunity to see the report. At this point it is not known when he will be releasing the report to the public.



FSC CANADA'S BOREAL FOREST STANDARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

From: Forest Stewardship Council Canada, News Release: December 12, 2003

The Forest Stewardship Council of Canada has given unanimous endorsement to a National Standard for forest management practices in the Boreal forest following a National Forum in Winnipeg last week. The standard will now be submitted to FSC International for international accreditation.

"This standard represents a major step forward as a challenging and practical measure of responsible forest practices in Canada's single largest forest region", says Denise English, FSC Canada Chair and representing the East Kootenay Environmental Society. "It demonstrates FSC's true value in convening the greatest cross-section of divergent interests to solve forest issues of common concern."

Consensus was reached following a round of public consultation and input that completed over two years of work spanning eight provinces, 2 territories and various international meetings. More than 2000 individuals and 175 committee members on 15 committees participated in over 70 meetings, 2 national forums, and 4 field-testing exercises contributing to this achievement. FSC International accreditation may be expected as early as March 2004.

Jim Webb, also an FSC Canada Board member representing the National Aboriginal Forestry Association and the Little Red River Cree Nation in Alberta stated, "The standard provides Indigenous Peoples with an opportunity to cooperatively work with industry in a manner acceptable to them towards mutually agreed solutions in the forest. The challenge ahead is to communicate clearly and help Indigenous communities benefit from this opportunity."

"While challenging for industry, the compelling value of this standard is the degree of agreement among the various interested parties – economic, environmental, communities and Indigenous Peoples," notes Brent Rabik of Alberta Pacific Industries and FSC Canada Board member.

"Third-party certification of forest management and forest products to this standard provides assurance to consumers that the products they purchase do not contribute to the degradation of the world's forests," says Jim McCarthy, Executive Director of FSC Canada, "and, as seen through recent public commitments from organizations like Domtar, Tembec and Home Depot, it has emerged as a globally important marketing tool."

Canada is home to over a third of the world's boreal forest and a tenth of total global forest cover. The boreal forest



Boreal Forest in Lakeland

occupies 35% of the total Canadian land area, 75% of Canada's total forestland, and represents 85% of the inaccessible forest in Canada. The boreal region forms a continuous belt from Newfoundland and the Labrador coast westwards to the Rocky Mountains and northwestwards to Yukon. In addition, the boreal forest is home to over 80% of the Indigenous communities in Canada and important to their livelihood, culture and spirituality. It provides a critical source of income from forest products and other forest uses for most northern communities.

The Forest Stewardship Council is an internationally based organization that established 10 Principles and Criteria defining the threshold for good forest management around the world. FSC Canada is responsible for the implementation of the Principles and Criteria through the development of performance indicators for Canada. ❄️

FIRST SNOW

Dancing and swirling fog,
Mysteriously gray,
All day yesterday,
Whispering ominously.
Promising winter,
By tomorrow.

Bitter and raw wind,
Sharp and cutting
Piercing and penetrating.
Promising winter,
By evening.

And now, snow,
Softly and silently.
All night tonight
Patient and gentle.
Promising peace,
By morning.

-Tom Maccagno



BACKCOUNTRY WHOPPER

By William Davies

*Some folk like a lot of noise,
With crowds all having fun;
But give me peace - and best of all
A corner in the sun.*

- David Hope

The time is the early nineteen eighties when during one distinct backpack trip, a brief, but genuine encounter remains with me. The lasting impression has helped express my attitude towards the mountains and wilderness ever since.

It happened during an upward trek into B.C.'s Mount Robson Park where my good hiking buddy and I eventually wandered high up onto the Robson Glacier below Robson's glaciated NW face. Access to even the lower environs of Mt. Robson is a persistent elevation gain to say the least. And because Robson is such a massif, it is said to create its own microclimate: a guarantee for wet weather. So, with this in mind we were well prepared and glad for it, because our experience happened while it was raining.

Quite possibly it was the misty mountains that heightened our experience as my buddy and I were soul-stirred in a momentary brush with the transient closeness of a mountain man. I use the phrase "transient closeness" because it was not your familiar meet or greet the on-coming hiker scenario; it was just a passing-by event weighted by the influence of this individual's curious aura.

We planned our trip to take us up, into the mountains, but his swift figure, in all appearances seemed to not be hiking up, nor down, nor out... but fleeing! The portrayal needs to evoke lore that his "mountain wandering" amid the solace of wilderness where destination should seem meaningless, had gifted our man with...revelation.

The grey haired mountain man personified with hoary facial hair was steadfast in his motion, head down, eyes fixed. As he brushed by we noticed his mountain worthy gear and a composure signifying that no pain was being spared in shouldering his pack as he masterfully repeated the task of tracking one foot in front of the other.

Embraced by mist, swayed by the sound of dripping water, captives in an icy rock cathedral we couldn't help but be awed at the sight. Together we watched in wonder as he nimbly trekked down the trail while rainwater slowly seeped into his boot print's muddy impressions. My emotion was WOW!

I remarked to my friend that I thought what the guy was doing was great! I thought that he's gotta be at least fifty years old and not giving up. He's still out here, still pushing determinedly to interact with solitude, seeking some adventure of self-worth. Still being complimentary with nature, if only for a short time, while the self is extricated briefly from the modern world. And it is fast becoming more modern as the appetite for subjugation over nature is advancing at a frantic pace.

In the moment of encounter I felt the conviction that as I

should also age, let me age with a desire to be like him. Like a grizzled old-timer man of the mountains still givin'er till the day I die, courageously fighting back my inevitable death between two clean white sheets. With wantonness to wander the mountains somewhat as a mountain refugee, as an eagle in flight on outstretched wings negotiates a mountain valley in search of new vistas. Still hiking and backpacking until I'm well over fifty years old.

That day has arrived and I now look back on my fiftieth birthday with an appreciation for health and an undeterred attitude toward wilderness. You could say that I am now a 'mid-timer', somewhat like a bridge of life's experiences between a generation of veteran wanderers and the wilderness yearning rookies. In many respects I am fortunate, even blessed, to have witnessed remarkable human achievements, senseless insults to humanity and the wondrous birth of my children.

But there has also been the witnessing of change. In our encounter with the mountain man, was his fleeing an actual evasion from the pursuit by change in the modern world? Was it from a secluded mountain vantage point that he caught in his hands a glimpse of the future, like a morsel of bread couriered to him on wings from some distant parking lot of commercialized wilderness?



Lake of the Falls

Very recently, pursuit by change became a reality for me. I don't know if it was by providence or coincidence, but nonetheless, change is what I witnessed. The assault on the senses was as destructive as if you had gone to visit your prairie hometown after fifty years absence only to find the familiar row of grain elevators gone. Demolished! The salvaged wood replanned to be used as frames for pictures of what was once a gratifying prairie way of life.

We hadn't been into the wilderness area surrounding the Cline River backcountry in nearly four years, so we decided to visit Lake of the Falls. The Cline flows partially through the Bighorn Wildland; to the south is the Siffleur Wilderness, to the north the White Goat Wilderness.

By mid-morning we were at the turn-in area beside the highway, but I noticed something I hadn't seen before. In a once forested area was now a clearing with log-type office building,



three heli-pads and three helicopters. Alongside the highway glared an advertisement board "HELI HIKING TOURS." I had a feeling of angst much like Charlton Heston's final explicit utterance from the original *Planet of the Apes* - paraphrased here in consideration of others, "You've gone and done it. You bas... s, you've gone and done it!" The backcountry whoppers had arrived.

Our four days escape into the wilderness was shamefully stolen from us by the obtrusive obscene noise of what basically amounted to an alpine taxi service. Imagine backpacking all day into your destination only to have other parties ferried in by helicopter.

Imagine setting up your camp only to have another party in a helicopter hover over you, then alight at another clearing along the lakeshore because you were camped where they wanted to be. Imagine awaking to a mountain morning beside a mountain-jewel lake while in a clearing behind you there's three helicopters ferrying in picnic tables, groups of paying "senior tourists", uniformed tour guides chit chatting while others pound stakes into the 'heath' then erect a mountain party tent.

Imagine hiking-about, wanting to photograph alpine environs in peace and solitude while helicopters annoyingly fly about like horse flies buzzing around your head while "on the trail". Imagine the silence of the mountains shattered by the continual air occupation of backcountry whoppers. A portion of verse from a song by Bruce Cockburn came to mind, "If I had a rocket launcher....."

For four days I was puzzled by an oxymoron - Infuriating Peace. Mountain wilderness areas traditionally only accessible to

the sure-footed white mountain goat should surely not be allowed to be displaced by "gawking 'copter patrons". To where does the mountain goat flee when its domain is invaded? For the mountain goat, and all other permanent inhabitants, the mountains are their home. Is there any other place on this planet that you would tell a white goat, or mule deer or grizzly bear to go and live?

It is inherent in all peoples that we need times of solitude - aloneness. In writings from biblical times the wilderness had been regarded as a place of rejuvenating intimacy, where the soul could draw a freshness to confront the issues of life. Helicopters are noise polluters, which disrupt the solitude of the wilderness experience. These machines are best utilized in forest fire fighting efforts, mountain rescue, wildlife biology, etc.

For the first time ever in my life I wanted to leave the mountains in search of peace elsewhere. My romantic sentiment of being an aging

mountain man, still holding the mobility of youth and more vibrant days but burdened with the cough of exhaustion from gaining the altitude of yet another favorite pass through the mountains began to fade. The end of an era had arrived.

It's an unredeemed day when the article of life by which a person chooses to define himself is eroding away. And in the end perhaps our encounter with mountain man was extraordinarily a mystic foreshadowing of ourselves. Perhaps the curious aura we sensed years ago on that tranquil misty mountain trail was our future, sensed through the medium of revelation which only solace in the mountains facilitates. Mountain man was fleeing from our second millennial world, but we've caught up with him. Happy trails mountain wanderer - may you journey in Peace. 🌲



Heli-camp at Wilson Lake, Bighorn Wildland

NEW WEBSITE FOR YA HA TINDA ELK PROJECT

By Mark Hebblewhite

The project website for the Ya Ha Tinda elk and wolf project is <http://ursus.biology.ualberta.ca/yhtelkwolfproject/>. The website features an outline of the project, methods, objectives, personnel, and contact information. The report page has all progress reports and papers associated with the project and a list of past and upcoming public talks and communication events. I hope you find the website useful and helpful. I will be making some additions in the near future that complete it and posting updated links to other projects and community websites. 🌲



Illustration by Charles Douglas, reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature Ottawa, Canada



HELICOPTER RESTRICTIONS A VICTORY FOR THE BIGHORN

By Lara Smandych, AWA Conservation Biologist



In December 2003, the Clearwater County upheld their decision to restrict helicopter activity by Rimrock holdings Inc. in the Central Alberta Eastern Slopes and Rocky Mountains. AWA has been campaigning for formal protection of the Bighorn area for more than 30 years and is pleased to find support from Clearwater County. This decision is a positive step in the realization that these intrusive activities are not compatible with wilderness value or experience.

In Fall 2003, Rimrock Holdings Inc., who operates Icefield Helicopters, applied to the Municipal Planning Commission of Clearwater County for the removal or relaxation of condition 13 (a), which restricts the number of helicopters the company uses to three, six-passenger aircraft.

Following deliberations, the planning commission refused the application. Reasons for the refusal included concerns over the potential negative impacts that increased flights may have on wildlife, the environment and recreational users. It seemed that the Bighorn had been granted a reprieve from inappropriate helitourism activity.

In late November 2004, Rimrock appealed the County's decision. The appeal hearing was held in Rocky Mountain House by the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB). In support of the county's initial decision, AWA submitted a written letter to SDAB outlining AWA's position on helitourism over wilderness and strongly urging and recommending the County uphold their decision to restrict helicopter activity in the area. Fortunately, the Board upheld the County's decision and Rimrock was given notification in December 2003 that their application had again been denied.

Icefield Helicopter Tours is located between Jasper and Banff National Parks on the David Thompson Highway (Highway 11). Their activities operate over the wilderness of the National Parks and in the heart of the Bighorn Wildland, AWA's long-standing area of concern. AWA and local tourism operators want increased restrictions placed on helitourism operations over wilderness areas especially in the area of

Bighorn Wildland, one of the last great wilderness areas in this province.

Helitourism has no place in wilderness. Noise from helicopters can have negative impacts on wildlife through disturbance, stress and displacement of wildlife populations, particularly during sensitive seasons and at certain times of the day. Stress to wildlife is a concern in that helicopter activity may cause species to abandon preferred habitat out of fear or irritation and subsequently lead to long-term population declines. Studies have shown that animals such as the bighorn sheep and grizzly bears have their feeding, breeding or other habits suddenly disrupted from approaching helicopter. Some birds have been found to flush when disturbed by helicopters, which may cause the abandonment or displacement of nests.



Heli-operations in the Bighorn Wildland

Helicopters also disrupt the solitude of the wilderness experience of backcountry users and diminish its value. Noise from helicopters can negatively impact the recreation activities of those expecting a quiet setting away from the hustle and bustle and noise of urban centres. A local survey found that a large majority of users of this area think that helicopter tourism of wilderness areas is inappropriate.

AWA knows first hand the disturbance air traffic can have on backcountry experience. The

Association has been conducting monthly field studies in the Bighorn area over the last year. The roar of passing domestic/international air traffic over the area is a common daily occurrence. In a wilderness where you can travel for up to 10 days without encountering any sign of civilization, and drink directly from the streams, the sound of engines day and night offers little hope for a genuine wilderness escape. The area is already under threat from the recent legalization of motorized activity in the area, as well as the selling of oil and gas leases. An increase in helicopter activity would only further negatively impact biodiversity, ecological integrity and backcountry recreation in this magnificent area. 🍁



ASSOCIATION NEWS

LOOKING IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

By Cliff Wallis

As I look back over my last four years as AWA President and my 25 years as a board member, I feel considerable pride. We are a great team. I would like to thank the great staff and volunteers that keep us at the leading edge of wilderness advocacy and an executive director that has reinvigorated the organization financially and spiritually. I would like to extend my appreciation to all the members who support us financially or with letters or phone calls to elected officials and key decision-makers.

The spiritual home for many Albertans and certainly AWA's members lies in their wild lands, waters and species. The AWA is where it always has been, on the front lines, working tirelessly for wilderness and wildlife protection. It is important to renew ourselves by celebrating our successes even as we see new threats looming on the horizon. There have been significant victories for wilderness and wildlife in the past four years:

- raising awareness about off-highway vehicles into the Prime Protection Zone at the Bighorn and the implications this has for all of the Eastern Slopes
- protecting the South Saskatchewan River Canyon by successfully defeating the proposed Meridian Dam and seeing the establishment of the Suffield National Wildlife Area
- helping to set the bar by which forest companies will be certified and continuing to build alliances in the marketplace to protect Alberta's wild foothills and boreal forests like Little Smoky and Lakeland
- being at the forefront of an initiative to protect and restore large blocks of native grassland and associated wildlife in SE Alberta
- educating Albertans on wild land issues through *Wild Lands Advocate*, outreach programs and field tours
- maintaining Alberta's premier resource centre for wild land issues
- working to defend the McClelland Lake Fen near Fort McMurray from oil sands development
- successfully defending the Whaleback from a new sour gas development
- sounding the alarm on another dam proposal on the Milk River Ridge
- profiling the plethora of problems that our native wildlife face from game farming
- focusing on water issues through our participation in the Bow River Basin Council
- defeating Bill 15, the Natural Heritage Act, which would have weakened wildland protection
- securing Wildland Park designation for Hay-Zama Lakes and parts of Chinchaga and accelerating removal of oil wells from the most sensitive areas of Hay-Zama Lakes
- protecting Kananaskis Country from new commercial and industrial developments
- stopping the sale of mineral rights in the Milk River Natural Area
- stopping a major pipeline in the Rumsey Natural Area
- defending Cardinal Divide in public hearings against the proposed Cheviot Coal Mine
- associating with wildcanada.net to promote new avenues for environmental citizenship



Cliff Wallis

The AWA has an amazing history. No other conservation organization has done more to protect wildlands and wildlife in Alberta. In addition to our traditional work along the Eastern Slopes in the Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative, we have been staunch defenders of the wild grasslands and parklands of southern Alberta as well as the boreal forest and foothills through central and northern portions of the province. This work is as tough as it gets and it takes a long time to see results.

But we can't look in the rear view mirror to see where we need to go. Dr. Tom Power, economist at University of Montana, says that would be a sure fire recipe for disaster. Indeed, managing by looking in the rear view mirror is why Alberta continues to focus on resource extraction to the



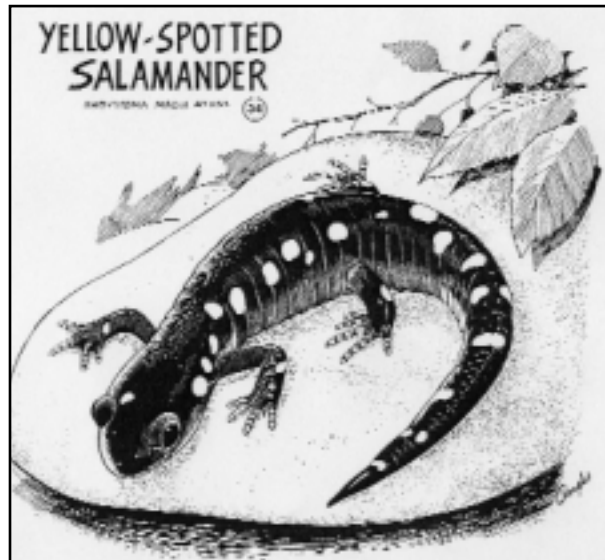
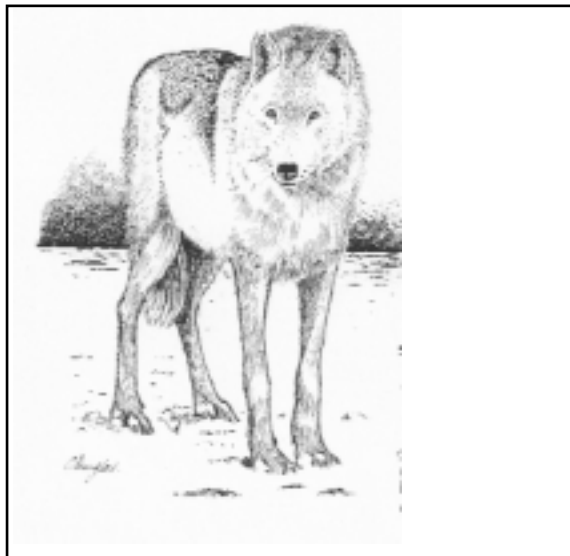
detriment of wilderness and wildlife. I prefer to think of a new future where wildlife and wild landscapes are the predominant economic generator in many parts of Alberta. This economic transformation is happening throughout the intermountain west of the United States and it is starting to happen here. There has been an unprecedented outpouring of public support and increased media attention to wilderness and wildlife issues. The public firmly believes that wilderness areas must be kept free of industrial development.

As wilderness advocates we often are accused of ignoring people and caring only about nature. We will not abandon our dedication to protecting wild landscapes but must get smarter about our people relationships. It is imperative that we understand more fully what motivates people to action and what transforms local communities into champions for wilderness conservation. Our wild lands waters and species are at the core of our value system. AWA staff and volunteers have dedicated decades of effort to their protection. Most of our expertise has come from the natural sciences. That has been essential to identifying what is important to protect. We

need to complement this knowledge with the advice of experts from the social sciences, an approach we are applying to a pilot in the Lakeland area of northeastern Alberta.

The AWA has been instrumental in protecting wildlands in every corner of Alberta and future generations will continue to enjoy its many benefits. It is not enough to rest on our laurels and enjoy what we have protected. As long-time wildlife defender Brock Evans notes, the battle to protect wilderness and wildlife is "endless pressure, endlessly applied". Alberta's wild lands, waters and species are worth it.

This continues to be a pivotal time for Alberta's wilderness. The challenges are still there and perhaps greater than ever but there is great public support and the winds of change are blowing through the Alberta government again. We must both confront and work side by side with industry, ranchers and government to secure more protection. The AWA is our voice for the wilderness. It deserves our support as it pursues its many creative approaches to defending Alberta's wildlands. 🍁



Illustrations by Charles Douglas, reproduced courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada

BIGHORN WILDLAND IN PRINT

Nestled along the central east slopes is 4,000 sq km of spectacular wilderness. Find out more about one of the last great pristine wilderness areas in Alberta, the Bighorn Wildland, in this latest book from AWA.

- Filled with spectacular photographs, excellent maps, personal reflections and natural history of the majesty of this beautiful area.
- An excellent introduction for those seeking a wilderness experience.
- Written by highly regarded experts with first-hand knowledge of the area; their personal experiences in the Bighorn make this book easy to read.
- A valuable reference for years to come.

For more information or to obtain copies of the book, please contact Nigel Douglas, (403)283-2025; awa@shaw.ca or visit our Web site www.AlbertaWilderness.ca for a list of bookstores or to order online. Paperback, full colour, \$29.95 (\$7 shipping and handling). 🍁



SPECIAL DONATIONS GIVEN TO RESOURCE CENTRE

The Alberta Wilderness Resource Centre has received donations of materials from many people over the past several years. These donations have ranged from books and photos to unique documents about Alberta's wilderness areas. In this issue we would like to mention one of the recent donations that has been made. We were very pleased to have the opportunity to select items from the famous collection of the late Ron Seale. Mr. Seale's stepdaughter, Peggy Holroyd, contacted us about part of his collection that was at her house in Calgary, and she donated dozens of books and many Parks reports. We would like to thank Peggy and Elizabeth Seale for providing the information for the following article.

RON SEALE - A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Ron Seale had a deep connection with the land developed early in part through family travels through the Rocky Mountains. With his parents, Gordon and Evelyn Seale, and his brother Gary, the family camped all over Canada and the States. They frequently went to the Rockies where he fell in love with the National Parks. Ron worked for years with Parks Canada. Charles Enman, in an article for the Ottawa Citizen, described him as an extrovert who traveled the world and made friends everywhere.

After attending the University of Alberta and the London School of Economics he joined the faculty of the Dept. of Geography at the University of Windsor. It was there that he became a confirmed environmental activist, establishing a chapter of Pollution Probe, writing letters to editors and politicians, and highlighting environmental questions in his courses. He even ran for Parliament in 1974 under the New Democrat party.

Parks continued to draw Ron and in 1974 he went to work as a Senior Interpretive Specialist for Parks Canada in Winnipeg. Among his various posts he was chief naturalist at Banff National park, Superintendent of the Queen Charlotte Islands and Superintendent of Fundy National Park in new Brunswick. More recently he had made his home in Yellowknife and had been helping establish new national and territorial parks in northern Canada. Prior to his untimely death from a heart attack at age 57 in 1999, he had been working on the Northwest Territories Protected Areas Strategy. Upon its approval in April 1999,

Stephen Kakfwi, minister of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development dedicated the report to two members of the advisory group, one of whom was Ron Seale, "a man

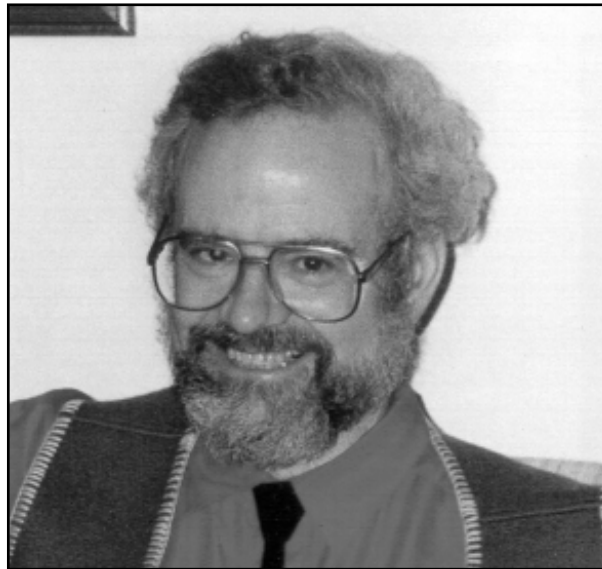
who devoted both his professional and personal life to preserving our wild spaces and parks."

Ron's wife, Elizabeth, said that her husband had spent his whole life working with protected areas and that he also believed in this link between conserving resources, harvesting them and culture – a comprehension that allowed him to work successfully with aboriginal groups like the Inuvialuit. She also works with Parks Canada in the Northwest Territories.

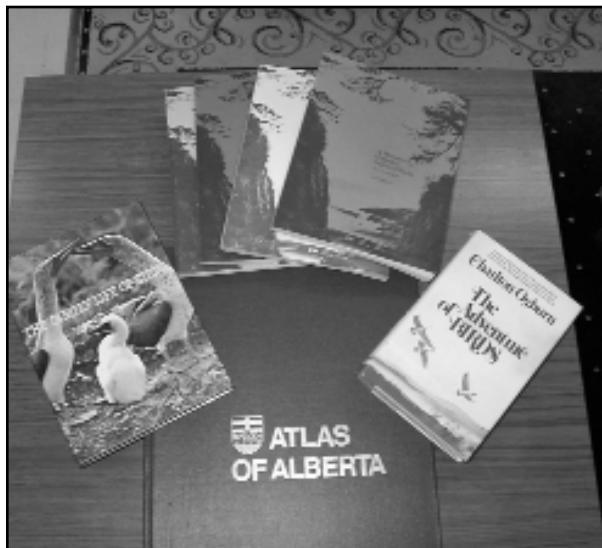
Throughout the years, Ron traveled inquisitively and joyously: Europe, South America, the Galapagos Islands, Belize, Guatemala, the Orkney Islands, Mexico, Trinidad, the Middle East, every province and probably every one of the United States. International parks work was an obvious extension of his love of parks and travel. He worked in Zimbabwe, and as technical advisor for the World Conservation Union in Uganda.

Ron was concerned about social and environmental issues on a global scale and he acted on his concerns at international, national and local levels through various volunteer efforts.

"His fascination with life was unqualified," Elizabeth recalls of a man who never ceased learning. He had a background in history and geography. His 10,000-volume library was famous. Everyone who visited Ron was impressed by the volume and diversity of his library, which



Ron Seale, 1941 - 1999



Some of the donated books from Ron Seale's collection. One of the items is a 1969 Atlas of Alberta for which Mr. Seale was a contributor.



reflected his wide range of interests. His children dubbed him "Encyclopedia Seale" because, Enman wrote, "he was by far the most useful starting point when they were facing any research project."

Jim Johnston, a colleague in Parks Canada, recalled him as a naturalist who could "communicate and instruct and entertain" and never "recited dryly the Latin names of plant species...no, he gave an infectious sense of something bigger – the real nature of the world and of the dangers the planet faces." ❁

(Among the items in Ron Seale's collection were some of the Natural History Notebooks from the National Museum of Natural Sciences. These notebooks contained the artistic work of Charles Douglas, who we featured in our December 2003 issue and who we also feature in this issue. We would like to thank the Canadian Museum of Nature Ottawa, Canada for permission to reproduce these images.)

CONNECTING LINKS IN THE CLASSROOM: SPECIES AT RISK AND THE MT PROGRAM

By Trish Pryce, Masters of Teaching Student, University of Calgary



As a first year student in the Master of Teaching Program at the University of Calgary, I was assigned my community workplace experience with the Alberta Wilderness Association. Nine student teachers in total were placed with AWA in order to gain teaching experience outside of the traditional 'teacher in the classroom'

format.

Having worked with AWA several years ago, I was quite excited about my placement, and felt that whatever we were expected to do would be awesome given that I am interested in conservation and the health of our province.

Our first meeting involved a debriefing where Vivian Pharis and Nigel Douglas explained our project. We were provided with a ton of useful information and were told that we had the next week to come up with a format (or several) to present information to students ranging from elementary to senior high on Species At Risk in Alberta.

My excitement shifted to anxiety! My partner, Kai Kleinitz, and I stared at each other blankly. Where do we begin? How do we format all of this information in a way that varying ages of students will understand and be engaged with what we are telling them? What are the classrooms like? How do we create an interactive and meaningful presentation?

Paralyzed with questions, we slowly broke down the

whole into small bits that didn't seem so daunting. This was a meaningful topic, and we wanted the students to get as much out of the hour-long presentation as they could.

The first classroom experience was terrifying for me. I wasn't sure if I could keep my head on and warned Kai that I might be useless. He was super supportive and amazingly, we did okay. It wasn't the best presentation that we did, but as time progressed, both of us became more comfortable in our own skins. As we became more relaxed, our personalities filled the presentation with animation and spontaneity. Our approach grew into one of flexibility.

For the older students (grade 4 and up) we created a basic

outline of what we wanted to discuss with students and collected visual props to enhance the presentation. From that point, we entered classrooms and modified each presentation for what the atmosphere in the room dictated. Some classes were really enthusiastic and our presentation took on a life of its own as the students participated in brainstorming ways that we, as a society, can modify our behaviors in order to minimize our impact on wild lands and the species that inhabit them.

We discussed how one action (ie. liberal spraying of pesticides) appears to affect one small organism (ie. grasshoppers), but that in fact, this action has an accumulative impact all the way up the food chain. Who's at the top of the food chain? We would ask. And light bulbs would blink all



A Masters of Teaching group with Heinz Unger, Nigel Douglas and Vivian Pharis (far left, back row) from AWA



around the room as students, young and older, would make the connection that whatever we are doing to the smallest of creatures, is going to affect US as a species also.


I think that this connection was really poignant for a lot of kids. We tend to distance ourselves from the "wild" side, and talking about how we really are a piece of the whole brought students to a place of connection with what's "out there".

With the young students, we made some simple costumes and played out a "day at the lake" with them. Each student represented a species at risk or a person having an impact on the lake ecosystem. We felt that for young kids, participating in a scenario that showed them how litter, noise, fuel pollution, pesticide/herbicide spraying etc. affects wildlife and their 'homes' would be a more effective way of reaching this age group. The kids enjoyed the novelty and were amazingly thoughtful when prompted to think of ways we can change our behavior so that our impact on ecosystems is minimized.

Our primary focus evolved into encouraging students to think of the things that they could do as individuals to help keep wild spaces clean. We would end our time in the classroom with the question: Knowing what you know now, what might you do differently the next time you go out to the wilderness for the day/weekend?

Students responded in ways that revealed a new awareness about and respect for the lives and homes of other species. They also gained an awareness of how our consumption of resources that we tend to take-for-granted (ie. gas, oil, timber) affects the pressures on our wildlands and eventually on our own quality of life.

As time progressed, the growth that Kai and I experienced was amazing. We wanted to make our presentation meaningful for students, which did not involve sticking to a system, we realized. Each class was different, each child unique in their interpretation and perspective, and it was up to us to try and reach each student with something valuable about how important it is to care about our province's wild spaces and the variety of species that inhabit them.

We may not have succeeded with every individual, but at least we provoked thought, which is something! And the experience itself generated a lot of questions in me as to how I can move from this experience into the classroom as a teacher who can make subjects relevant and interesting for each individual so that s/he feels like a participating member in the chain of life! Much thanks to the AWA for providing us with a relevant learning experience!! 



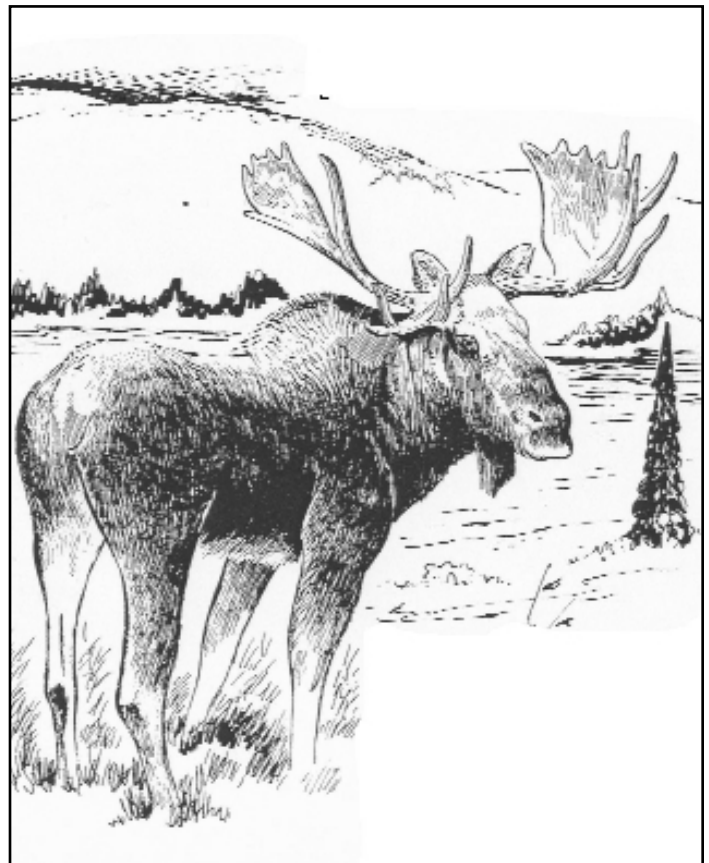
PAINT THE CALGARY TOWER

Saturday March 13, 2004

Join us for the annual
Calgary Tower Mural Competition.

- Bring your creative talents to celebrate Alberta Wilderness.
- Create a lasting mural in the stairwells of the Calgary Tower.
- Visit www.climbforwilderness.ca for details and registration.
- See last year's winning murals on the website.

Deadline for entry is Wednesday March 3, 2004.



*Illustrations by Charles Douglas, reproduced courtesy of the
Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada*



OPEN HOUSE TALKS PROGRAM

CALGARY

Location: The Hillhurst Room,
AWA, 455 – 12 St. NW
Time: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Cost: \$5.00 per person: \$1 for children
Contact: (403) 283 2025 for reservations
Pre-registration is advised for all talks.

Tuesday February 24, 2004
**Wolves and Elk: Their Ecology and Conservation
in Alberta's Eastern Slopes**
with Mark Hebblewhite

Tuesday March 9, 2004
**Riparian 101: All You Ever Dreamed of Knowing
About the Green Zone**
with Lorne Fitch

Monday May 3, 2004
Wildflowers and Wildlife Photography
with Robert Berdan
To be confirmed

OTHER EVENTS

Wednesday, March 10, 2004
**Alberta's Freshwater Ocean: Lesser Slave Lake
Provincial Park and Bird Conservation Centre**
with Frank Fraser

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Location: Fish Creek Environmental Learning
Centre, west end of Fish Creek Provincial Park.

Admission: \$5.00 per person (space is limited).

Contact: For more information and reservations,
297-7927

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Editorial Disclaimer: The opinions expressed by the various authors in this publication are not necessarily those of the editors or the AWA. The editors reserve the right to edit, reject or withdraw articles submitted.



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION PRESENTS
CLIMB FOR WILDERNESS.
RUN FOR WILDERNESS.
APRIL 17, 2004 AT THE CALGARY TOWER

13th Annual Climb for Wilderness
Climb 802 Stairs

2nd Annual Run for Wilderness
Run 1km & Climb 802 Stairs



www.climbforwilderness.ca
www.runningroom.com



SUPPORT ALBERTA WILDERNESS

"Our quality of life, our health, and a healthy economy are totally dependent on Earth's biological diversity. We cannot replicate natural ecosystems. Protected areas are internationally recognized as the most efficient way to maintain biological diversity"

- **Richard Thomas**

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is dedicated to protecting wildlands, wildlife and wild waters throughout Alberta. Your valued contribution will assist with all areas of AWA's work. We offer the following categories for your donation. The Provincial Office of AWA hosts wall plaques recognizing donors in the "Associate" or greater category. Please give generously to the conservation work of AWA.

Alberta Wilderness and Wildlife Trust - an endowment fund established with The Calgary Foundation to support the long-term sustainability of the Alberta Wilderness Association. For further details, please contact our Calgary office (403) 283-2025.

Membership - Lifetime AWA Membership \$25 Single \$30 Family

Alberta Wilderness Association	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness Circle	\$2500 +
<input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropist	\$1000
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	



Cheque Visa M/C Amount \$ _____

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City/Prov. _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone (home): _____ Phone (work): _____

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I wish to join the Monthly Donor Programme!

I would like to donate \$ _____ monthly. Here is my credit card number OR my voided cheque for bank withdrawal. *I understand that monthly donations are processed on the 1st of the month (minimum of \$5 per month).*

AWA respects the privacy of members. Lists are not sold or traded in any manner. AWA is a federally registered charity and functions through member and donor support. Tax-deductible donations may be made to the Association at: Box 6398 Station D, Calgary, AB T2P 2E1. Telephone (403) 283-2025 Fax (403) 270-2743 E-mail awa@shaw.ca Website http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca

**Thursday, April 29, 2004
Wilderness Celebration Spring 2004**

Celebrate Wild Alberta

Join us for an evening of:

- Cocktails, conversation, fine gourmet hors d'oeuvres
- A fine Jazz ensemble
- Exciting live and silent auctions, unique raffles
- Other fun activities

Date: April 29, 2004

Time: 5:30 - 10:30 pm

Location: Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton

Tickets: \$60.00

Call: 1-866-313-0713 toll free
or visit: www.AlbertaWilderness.ca



**Moving?
Please let us know!**



Alberta Wilderness Association
Box 6398, Station D
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1
awa@shaw.ca

