



# WILD LANDS ADVOCATE

THE ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL



*Timber wolf (R. Berdan)*

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*From a public address by Norman Willmore to the Edson community on February 25, 1955*

“The broad basic problem is whether or not the Government should condone and encourage the industrialization of Alberta at the expense of the rivers, the air and the countryside of our Province through a lack of policy and foresight, or should we endeavour to promote industrialization in an orderly manner which will bring the greatest possible benefits to all the people in Alberta without necessitating the improper exploitation of our greatest natural resources – which are the air we breathe and the water and the soil.”

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## WILDERNESS – OURS TO VALUE, OURS TO LOSE

By Joyce Hildebrand, Editor

*Away away from men and towns  
To the wild woods and the downs  
To the silent wilderness  
Where the soul need not repress  
Its music...*

- Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sometimes when I lie awake at night trying to let the day's stress melt away, memories of Alberta's wild places rise to the surface: watching the moon rise on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River; feeling the summer sun on my skin in a moist alpine meadow in the Willmore; paddling on a glassy lake listening to loons in Lakeland. I imagine those places now, as serene and beautiful as when I was there to enjoy them, and I rest in the simple knowledge that the river is still flowing, the marmots whistling, the loons calling, even without human ears to hear or eyes to see.

"Public lands" seems too clinical a phrase to capture the importance of these landscapes to all Albertans, including future generations. Thanks to farseeing forebears, about two-thirds of Alberta's landbase belongs to all of us – as much as land belongs to any of us.

Some suggest that we should consider ourselves stewards rather than owners of the land. But most of us are too preoccupied with everyday tasks to be out there, monitoring what's going on. So we pass on our stewardship responsibility to our elected leaders, trusting that they will preserve those wild spaces that can't be replaced – only to discover that what we thought was "protected" has been quietly opened to logging, drilling, oil sands mining, and unrestricted off-highway vehicle use.

In this issue, we set the context with a history of public lands issues in Alberta, bringing us to the present with the current Land-Use Framework initiative. EnCana's proposal to drill 1,275 wells in the recently designated Suffield National Wildlife Area backgrounds Nigel Douglas's musings on the meaning of the word "protected." And Dick Dekker describes the long history of government stewards' short-sighted management of one species, the wolf. Government shooting of wolves from the air is presumably done to save the caribou, but the caribou's main challenge is not wolf predation but habitat loss.

"Not only is another world possible," says writer and activist Arundhati Roy, "she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing." Like Roy, social activist Paul Hawken is hopeful. In his latest book, *Blessed Unrest*, excerpted in this issue, Hawken describes the "dispersed, inchoate, and fiercely independent" movement that is afoot in civil society. In her article, Christyann Olson describes examples of this movement in our own province and predicts an increase in volume of voices calling for change. We hope their words will inspire you to continue defending Alberta's wild places.

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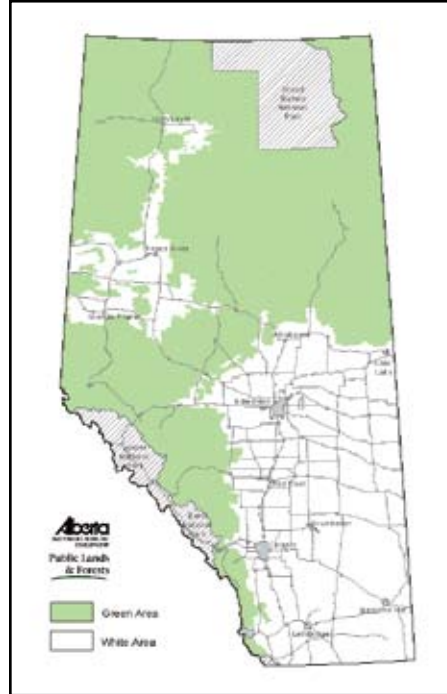
# LOCKED OUT – PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC LAND PERENNIALY CONTROVERSIAL

By Joyce Hildebrand

Helen Dixon first saw the Highwood Pass 87 years ago, before her first birthday, and has been back many times since. The changes she and her husband, Steve, saw when they drove through the Pass in September reminded them of how much has been lost. “What really scares me,” she says from their home in Brant, Alberta, “is that we could be looking at a totally different landscape if we don’t do something to protect public lands.”

Most of us keep close tabs on our material possessions, but the land that we own together with all Albertans generally escapes that close scrutiny. Many Albertans are understandably confused about “the ins and outs of public lands,” as Helen calls the complexities of the roughly two-thirds of the province’s landbase that is under common ownership. We hope to untangle some of the strands here and provide the facts that will motivate us all to be better stewards of this precious heritage.

Working for appropriate management of public lands has been an uphill battle through most of AWA’s existence. We have knocked heads with government, ranchers, and industry time and time again over issues related to access, public land sales, and management. Even the meaning of the term “public land” has been controversial.



## What is Public Land?

Approximately 60 percent of the land base in Alberta is considered public land. According to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), “Public land administered under the *Public Lands Act* is owned by the government of Alberta.” AWA defines public land as land managed and administered by our elected federal or provincial governments on behalf of the people of Alberta, who own this land. Although the terms *public land* and *Crown land* are interchangeable,

AWA prefers the more democratic term *public land*.

The entire province is divided into two broad land-use areas referred to as the Green Area and the White Area, 47 and 31 percent of Alberta, respectively (see map). Both the Green and White Areas contain both private and public land; the difference between the two is that the Green Area is largely forested and contains little human settlement while the White Area is mostly prairie and parkland, and contains most of Alberta’s human population. Cattle are grazed on public land in both the Green and White Areas, but almost all grazing leases (public land leased to farmers for cattle grazing) are in the White Area. Farmers wishing to graze cattle on public land in the Green Area are generally issued allotments, licenses, or permits, not leases. As we will see, this is crucial for the regulations regarding public lands access, which apply only to grazing leases.

According to the SRD website, “The Green Area (non-settled) is managed primarily for timber production.” Activities related to human settlement “are restricted because the land base is required for forest production.” In the White Area, where most of Alberta’s human population resides, a wider variety of uses is allowed.

AWA believes that major decisions about public lands – including those regarding sales, access, and management – should be made only after broad public consultation. This has sparked controversy over the years, especially with regard to land leased for agricultural use. Some farmers who are fortunate enough to have grazing leases consider leased land “their land,” which has affected both public access to public land under grazing lease and the sale of these lands. Government and the courts have taken different stands on these issues over the decades, and from this has evolved the problems with land

### Land Category Percent of Alberta

Public land	60% (94% of B.C. is public land)
Private land	28.5% (virtually all in the White Area)
Green Area (unsettled)	47%*
White Area (settled)	31%*
Public land in Green Area	57.5%
Public land in White Area	2.5%
Provincial protected areas	4.2%

\*These figures exclude federal land (10% of Alberta), provincial protected areas (4.2% of Alberta), tax-recovery lands, and areas of the province covered by water (2.5% of Alberta).

management we see today. Adding to the difficulties has been the steadfast refusal of the Alberta government to adequately address conservation issues and to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species, many of which occupy White Area grazing lease lands.

### The Access Debate Begins

Grazing leases, virtually all of which are in the White Area, are at the centre of the public lands access issue. For 35 years, AWA has been at odds with that small fraction of the agriculture community that holds grazing leases and wants restriction of public access. While many leaseholders feel that all public users should seek permission before entering leased land, AWA has maintained that the public has the right to access its own land for non-destructive purposes including nature study, research, stewardship, and simple enjoyment.

The access controversy seems to have begun in 1973 when a private member's bill was introduced in Alberta's legislature proposing to give grazing leaseholders the right to refuse access to the public. Although the bill was not passed, the controversy it engendered grew until an allegedly "accidental" amendment to the *Wildlife Act* was made, inferring that for future decisions, "private land" would be whatever Cabinet says it is. This meant that Cabinet could declare grazing leases private land without any legislation to this effect having been passed.

Things took a turn for the worse when in 1980 the Director of the Public Lands Division advised leaseholders that "a grazing lessee is entitled to rely on Sec. 41 of the Criminal Code to use as much force as is necessary to remove a trespasser." This, again, came with no supporting legislation in place.

By 1981 the controversy was growing, and the ranching community was placing increasing pressure on the government to change the laws that gave free right of public access to land leased for grazing. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Fish and Wildlife controversially stated that "common law dictates that grazing leases are considered 'real property,' and that under common law, a leaseholder may launch civil trespass actions against those who enter land leased for grazing

### Cattle Grazing and Public Land

Percent of Alberta's cattle grazed on White Area leases:	14%
Estimated percent of Alberta's cattle raised on public land:	20-25%
Number of agricultural dispositions in Alberta:	6,700*
Number of farmers with cattle in Alberta:	35,000
Estimated number of farmers in Alberta:	50,000

*\*This number includes 6,000 leases, 500 permits, and 200 licences. It does not include grazing reserves outside of dispositions. SRD could not ascertain how many individual producers this number represents. Some dispositions are held by grazing associations, in which the number of members ranges from 5 to more than 100.*



*While unfettered foot access is allowed on public land used for grazing in the Green Area (with the exception of the few grazing leases in this area), access to the White Area is severely restricted due to apparent concern for the safety of the public. These cattle appear as befuddled by this difference as do many human Albertans.*

without permission." Bob Scammell, a well-known lawyer and columnist in Red Deer, argued that common law does not apply to public land.

The government sat on the fence for two more years and in 1983 decided to avoid the problem by instituting the "Use Respect" program. Leaseholders would put "Use Respect" signs up on their leased land, and recreationists would presumably respond by asking permission to access the land. Some leaseholders, however, began putting up "No Trespassing" signs.

In 1985 the Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) and the Western Stock Growers' Association asked the government to change the *Trespass Act* to comply with the Criminal Code in order to give landowners and leaseholders absolute right over access. AWA responded by calling for a Public

Lands Conservation Policy, including a strategy to protect ecologically sensitive lands. Alberta was in desperate need of a plan to keep public lands in the public trust while ensuring that key lands received the protection needed to maintain ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Public Lands Grazing Lease Conversion Task Force was formed in 1987, and later that year, the Task Force released a report recommending (1) that foot and vehicle access to grazing leases be allowed without permission at all times, with vehicles being restricted to established roads or designated trails and (2) that a clear policy be developed for public access to public lands. Giving in to ranchers' demands, Forestry Minister LeRoy Fjordbotten ignored these recommendations.



*The South Saskatchewan River meanders through what remains of Alberta's native prairie in the southeastern corner of the province. Much of this land is leased for grazing and therefore inaccessible without permission.*

### The Debate Goes to Court

The access issue finally went to court two years later when George Alexson was charged with trespassing for hunting without permission on land leased for grazing. The court ruled that Alexson was not guilty, pointing out that public land leased for grazing is not private. The Crown appealed the decision and won, but when Alexson further appealed the case, the original ruling was restored. At the same time, an Alberta Fish and Wildlife Advisory Group subcommittee, which included an AWA representative, produced a report advising that leased land remain open to the public, with restrictions for vehicle access only.

In 1995 public lands access was challenged in court again in *OH Ranch Ltd. v. Wade T. Patton*. Legal action was brought against Patton after he shot an elk on leased land. The leaseholder happened to be stalking that same elk. This time, the court

ruled in the Ranch's favour and the appeal that followed was lost. AWA responded by organizing a protest at the OH Ranch. The controversy continued and 23 public hearings were held across the province. In 1998 the Agricultural Lease Review Committee released its report, recommending that recreationists seek permission before entering land leased for grazing. AWA argued that this land belongs to the public, and the leaseholder has no right to control access.

In 2003, after thirty years of controversy, the *Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act* legislated that recreational users must obtain permission before entering leased land and provide information about type, time and location of activity, number of participants, contact information, and any other related information requested by the leaseholder, such as the names of all the users and licence plate numbers of vehicles.

SRD contacted all grazing leaseholders to ask them to either provide SRD with the name of a contact person for recreational access or to specify that they don't want to be contacted prior to a visit. Almost every leaseholder provided the contact information. SRD placed this information on a government website for the public, suggesting that recreationists allow a week for the leaseholder to return their first call. After a week has passed, they should call several more times, and as a last resort, they can call the government hotline. A spontaneous birdwatching trip or hike in a prairie or parkland landscape is out of the question.

Why is the recreating public held to ransom for the benefit of the small, privileged group of Albertans who happen to hold grazing leases? AWA believes that government has been coerced by leaseholders into treating public lands under grazing

lease as private lands, and this has entrenched those farmers' perceptions of themselves as exclusive owners of the land rather than simply privileged users.

Public access to public lands was dealt another legislative blow last year with changes to Alberta's *Recreational Access Regulation* – those entering leased land without permission would be issued simple fines rather than required to make a court appearance. This largely removes the responsibility from the government and implies that there is no need for discussion with regard to access to public lands.

One might assume that leaseholders want to restrict public access because of liability issues. Legislation was passed in 2003, however, that placed the liability for injury on public land in the hands of the user. This policy was supported by both recreationists and leaseholders. Recreational users are now responsible for their own safety. SRD encourages leaseholders to notify users of possible hazards, but this is not required. Only if leaseholders "intentionally or negligently" try to hurt a user will they be held liable.

The act requiring users to obtain permission before accessing leased land applies only to grazing leases, not land under grazing allotments, licences, permits, or reserves. That means that, except for those few leases in the Green Area, recreationists are not required to contact owners of cattle grazing public land in the Green Area before accessing the area. Indeed, Albertans have unrestricted access by foot, horse, bicycle, ski, canoe, boat and, in many areas, off-highway vehicles for any recreational activity, including hunting. When the public uses Green Area public lands, they are responsible for themselves and must take safety precautions.

AWA has consistently challenged this difference. Why are White Area lands considered dangerous to the public, and vice versa, while Green Area lands are not? Why does the public have to be protected from dangerous bulls in the White Area, but users can take their chances in the Green Area? It seems unlikely that users cut fences, leave gates open, start grass fires, and shoot cattle in White



V. Pharis

*Public lands belong to all Albertans, but as of 2003, anyone wishing, for any purpose, to access public lands leased for grazing can only do so with the leaseholder's permission.*

lands, but for some inexplicable reason behave responsibly in the Green Area.

### **Confuse Them, and They Will Leave**

With hunting season upon us, the issue of public access to public lands again comes to our attention. Although the access issue affects recreationists year-round, it is often hunting season that brings it into sharp focus.

The precipitous drop in the number of hunters is apparently alarming the Alberta government – so much so that it has taken the unusual step of declaring an annual Alberta Hunting Day, beginning this year. Why has this drop in hunter numbers

occurred? Could it be linked to the new legal requirement that those accessing White Area grazing leases must gain prior permission from the leaseholder?

We put this question to Bob Scammell, a retired lawyer and outdoors writer with a long-time interest in public lands. He points out that various surveys have asked former hunters why they have stopped hunting. "The universal answer is 'Because there is no place left to hunt,'" he says. This infers that there is widespread confusion about where public lands are located and what the rules of access are. Scammell says that many are intimidated by the elaborate, convoluted website search needed to access the maps identifying agricultural leases and the contact information for leaseholders.

To see if this intimidation was justified, we attempted to access the information on SRD's website on our Macintosh computer. After many clicks, following the instructions carefully, we ended up back at the original web page. Upon calling SRD, we discovered that this system cannot be accessed on a Mac – we were told that government funds do not allow for the expense of accommodating Mac users. We then tried accessing the information on a PC. The first step – downloading the necessary software to access the information – failed when, after many attempts, the process stalled at the same point each time. We called SRD and were asked to email the problem, which would be forwarded to the appropriate technology personnel. Once the problem was resolved, we tried again. This time the downloading worked – but when we then clicked on

## **AWA'S VISION FOR PUBLIC LANDS**



AWA's vision for public lands is for large tracts of forest, grassland, mountain, and foothills wildlands, including natural waterways with intact natural processes, the full complement of wild species, unencumbered foot access for public enjoyment, sustainable harvest, stewardship, and opportunity for spiritual renewal. Alberta's public lands will exist in perpetuity for the benefit of all generations and for the conservation of indigenous wildlife.

the URL given to access the leaseholder locations and contact information, we were once again instructed to download the software. Caught in yet another vicious circle, we got off the treadmill and gave up. Anyone with less computer literacy would likely have thrown his hands up in frustration long before we did.

“The ultimate court case is still required in Alberta regarding free public access to public lands,” says Bob Scammell, donning his lawyer hat. “The law that will determine the outcome of such a case is the federal *Trespass Act*, which specifically excludes grazing leases.” Until someone rises to that challenge, Albertans have several choices: commit civil disobedience by accessing public land without leaseholder permission, plan excursions to public land enough in advance to lose and (hopefully) find ourselves in the website maze, or become armchair travellers, settling for pretty pictures of the rolling grasslands, big skies, and fascinating plants and animals that call those places home.

### Stand Up and Be Counted

Steve Dixon is about to celebrate his ninetieth birthday. One can only



C. Olson

*Steve Dixon in his Piper 2000 airplane.*

imagine how many changes he has seen in this province in the last nine decades; one thing that has not changed, however, at least since he helped found AWA 42 years ago, is the swirling controversy around public access to public land. But he has seen many changes in public lands management that concern him greatly.

This year Steve finally landed his plane for the last time. “He’s flown up and down all the Eastern Slopes,” says his wife, Helen, recalling the days before the booms of the last few decades. Despite their discouragement today with the endless development of small acreages and the selling of public

lands, they remain as passionate as ever about speaking out in defence of this irreplaceable resource. “People have to stand up and be counted,” says Helen. “Public land must be defended and truly protected.”

*In the next issue of the Wild Lands Advocate, we will explore issues related to the management and sales of public land in Alberta.*

*Thank you to Vivian Pharis and Danette Moulé for their contributions to this article.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ACT

A proposed new Environmental Sustainability Act could, if passed, turn out to be a useful addition to the Alberta government’s planning armoury as it continues to struggle with managing cumulative impacts on the landscape. In recent years, we have been trying to do more and more on a finite and fragile land base.

When Premier Stelmach took office in December 2006, he publicly issued mandate letters to each of his ministries. One of the tasks of Alberta Environment was to “develop a new environment and resource management regulatory framework to enable sustainable development by addressing the cumulative effects of development on the environment.”

The proposed new act, due out this fall, could enshrine concepts such as “cumulative effects” and “environmental sustainability” in legislation, which is a positive sign. It would require responsive, “results-based” management of the land, so rather than allowing each sector (oil and gas, forestry, recreation) to work to its own rules, management would be based on what the land itself could sustain.

It is encouraging that an act like this is even being considered. Like a hopeless alcoholic who has finally moved past the first step of denying his addiction, the Alberta government is finally acknowledging that its “multiple use” management of public

land has not worked for several years. Something is broken and needs fixing.

An act such as this will have to pass plenty of roadblocks before ever seeing the light of day, not least of which is likely to be internal bickering between ministries who don’t want to see other departments telling them what to do, thank you very much.

As long as it is not watered down liberally with the familiar escape phrases such as “ministerial discretion,” the proposed act could turn out to be a valuable tool in implementing landscape management that truly aims for environmental sustainability. Alberta deserves nothing less.





## THE GREENING OF INDUSTRY – GROWING EXPECTATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

*By Christyann Olson, AWA Executive Director*

When Alberta Wilderness Association began in the mid-1960s, the concept of large companies producing an annual social responsibility report would have elicited quizzical looks. Four decades later, with global warming and water quality and quantity at the top of the list of citizen concerns, expectations that businesses make efforts to be environmentally responsible are growing higher every year. How has this affected the relationship between industry and stakeholders such as landowners, conservation groups, and recreationists? And what will the future bring for stakeholder relations?

### **Citizen Empowerment**

Throughout Alberta, we are seeing growing unrest and increasing willingness to take a strong stand on issues that affect our well-being. Stakeholders are not as easily swayed as they once may have been, and they will become more defiant. They are becoming savvy; they are empowered and supported by the increasing concern and awareness of “ordinary” citizens. There is no doubt: groups like AWA are less tolerant of patronizing, condescending behaviour toward them by government or industry.

When Mark Twain said, “Whiskey is for drinking. Water is for fighting over,” no one could have known how relevant that argument would be today. We are hearing individuals and communities speak out when they believe that their water source may be negatively impacted by industrial activities. In Michael Enright’s recent CBC feature on the landowners of the Porcupine Hills, we heard the passion in the voices of these individuals. Their words about the way industry has dismissed their concerns about water echoed across Canada and struck a chord of dissent that will only grow louder.

The failure of governments and industry to protect water, wildlife, ecosystems, and landowners’ rights is resulting in the development of new local citizens’ groups focusing on protection. Offers of cash and other incentives are being refused in favour of demands for life-cycle planning, overall land-use planning, and action to reduce cumulative effects.



C. Olson

*AWA’s Nigel Douglas consults with representatives from Alberta SRD and Shell Canada.*

While government has not taken a leadership role, landowners, conservationists, First Nations, and industry have been making collaborative agreements about areas that need protection. The Hay-Zama process, for example, shows that multi-stakeholder groups can work to benefit wilderness, as well as the people and wildlife dependent on the land. The three co-chairs of the Committee – representing oil and gas, First Nations, and the Government of Alberta – facilitate the process, modeling the collaborative nature of the endeavour and ensuring that everyone’s interests are represented. Together since 1994, the Committee has had times when

things have gone off track, but it has always presented a united front.

Similarly, the Southern Foothills Study was born out of frustration at the lack of long-term government planning and the absence of any organization with the ability to deal with the cumulative effects of multiple activities on a finite landscape. Moving into the current planning vacuum, a diverse group of landowners, municipalities, environmentalists, and industrial representatives got together to assess what the landscape would look like if the current lack of planning continued. What should effective landscape-scale cumulative effects planning look like?

### **Industry Takes Leadership**

When it comes to credible sources for information on the environment, surveys like the Edelman Trust Barometer are telling us that the public finds non-governmental organizations like conservation groups more credible than business. This trend, which has evolved over a number of years, gives conservationists additional power. The past year has seen examples showing that companies want to be seen as environmentally responsible.

One such example is the campaign spearheaded by ForestEthics that exposed Victoria’s Secret’s association with logging in caribou range. A full-page ad in the *New York Times* in January 2005 drew significant attention to the campaign begun in 2004. Victoria’s Secret took notice, and a dialogue opened up between Limited Brands (parent company of Victoria’s Secret) and ForestEthics. By December 2006, Limited Brands had reached an agreement with ForestEthics and signed a new paper contract. They announced a landmark environmental policy ensuring that their catalogue paper will not come from endangered forests – including those in Alberta’s foothills and boreal regions.

Conservationists view changes



J. Hildebrand

*Diverse stakeholders – including representatives from industry, government, and conservation groups – examine oil and gas reclamation results in Rumsey Natural Area.*

in how business operates as key to protecting our environment. We have shifted from just pointing out the problems to pushing for real solutions. For companies, alliances with conservationists and environmental NGOs can help both the bottom line and the public image, and these alliances will become more coveted. Having an environmentally responsible image and providing environmental value is giving business a competitive edge. Indeed, the threat of bad publicity can and will force business to change.

But glossy advertisements trumpeting a company's green credentials are not enough. AWA expects industry to go beyond the minimum standards required. We anticipate that industry will use innovative techniques to minimize disturbance and will choose to leave sensitive areas undisturbed, even if the rules do not require them to do so. AWA has identified geographic areas of concern and like all stakeholder groups, we increasingly expect industry to be familiar with our areas of concern and the reasons behind them. Most would agree that we cannot replicate nature; protection of significant areas is the only way to protect our biodiversity, our health, and our wealth. Decisions to protect sensitive areas too fragile to

exploit will be increasingly difficult.

Too often, governments abdicate responsibility and avoid making those hard decisions. We anticipate increasing collaboration between conservationists and industry, sometimes contradicting government positions. Industry will need to take a leadership role with governments to get them to move positively on conservation, climate change, and other environmental issues. In order to hold on to its Forest Stewardship Council certification for sustainable forestry, for example, Alberta Pacific will have to work with environmental groups to pressure the government for more protected land in northeastern Alberta.

In the absence of leadership from government, industry players will increasingly be divided into cooperators and obstructionists. Industry associations like Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and Alberta Forest Products Association have, at times, been obstructionist, even though we have worked well with individual companies. It is not good enough to hand off responsibility to these associations.

### **Holding Businesses Accountable**

While traditional activist tactics – including both blockades and

cooperative efforts – don't always work, growing public expectations for environmentally responsible operations open the door for less traditional tactics like market action, which will be a very real pressure point. Although there is limited opportunity for market action in the retail sector on the energy side, shareholder issues can be addressed. For example, the companies in the Jantzi Social Index® reflect a higher standard of environmental, social, and governance performance. This index influences investor and shareholder decision making.

Legal recourse will be used more freely in the future. Judges will hear more cases and be required to interpret the law and render decisions. With a number of good decisions in our favour, conservation groups are building a good body of case law. We will see more legal challenges and more cases that rule in favour of the wild lands, wildlife, and wild water that we work to defend.

At AWA, we believe the winds of change are blowing stronger than ever, and it is prudent to take stock of stakeholders and the changing ways we will work together. We need industry to recognize our issues and areas of concern; smart industry knows they need us in their world. Together we can be a formidable force that will lead government to follow and make the rules that consider our highest values without compromise.

Margaret Mead's famous quote about the power of the people has been said many times and seen in action even more often – "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." The power of the people, as individuals and as groups, is a source of inspiration and awe as I work with people from all walks of life who know and understand the value of our natural world. The future will see more responsible decision making; there will be leaders and followers, but we can all make a difference.

*This article is adapted from a presentation made by Christyann Olson at the Petro-Canada Stakeholder Practitioners Workshop on June 27, 2007.*



## NEW PLAN IN THE WORKS FOR ALBERTA'S PARKS

By Chris Wearmouth, AWA Conservation Specialist

This year marks the 75th anniversary of Alberta's provincial parks. Fittingly, the Alberta government is looking closely at the current state of our parks and protected areas and developing a plan for the future.

In December 2006, the newly appointed premier, Ed Stelmach, wrote to his ministers, outlining their priorities for the years ahead. In the mandate letter to Hector Goudreau, Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture (TPRC), the Premier outlined the specific priorities of TPRC to include the development of "a plan for provincial parks and recreation areas to accommodate population growth and improve quality of life opportunities."

"With this mandate from the Premier... we want to be looking at what we need to be improving on as an organization," says Scott Jones, manager of planning for TPRC's Parks, Recreation and Sport Division.

In 1932 Alberta established its first provincial park at Aspen Beach on Gull Lake. Since then, the parks system has grown substantially, now including just over 500 sites under eight classes of parks ranging from Ecological Reserves to Heritage Rangelands. These parks cover more than 27,500 km<sup>2</sup> and attempt to represent and protect our province's diverse natural heritage while offering recreational opportunities for Albertans and others.

Jones states that at the moment, current planning is going through the budget process. Parks is busy putting

together their submission for the 2008 budget with hopes of getting approval to move forward on projects next year. The primary focus of current planning is upgrading the parks' infrastructure and existing facilities to accommodate Alberta's population growth.

"We'll be looking at trying to address our capacity issues within existing parks, looking at what we could do to upgrade the facilities. We'll also be looking to see if there are areas that we need to be adding like brand new parks," says Jones, although he adds that new parks take time and at this stage are just conceptual.

As the Alberta population continues to grow, the commercial and recreational pressure on our natural areas will intensify. This could very well cause a decline in the quality and diversity of our wild spaces. While infrastructure is important in some protected areas to localize human impact and offer people an enjoyable experience, Alberta must enlarge and connect the existing system. These new protected areas must complete the adequate representation of natural regions in the network. Without this expansion of protected areas, we may soon find ourselves adrift in a sea of human development with no land in sight.

Although the current planning is focused on upgrading infrastructure driven by the needs of recreationists, Parks will also be looking at how the system can be improved to protect our natural heritage. Jones says that Parks is hoping to capture "a broad representation of all the major landscapes in Alberta. We still have gaps in the system, from a preservation, biodiversity target perspective, specifically, grasslands, foothills, parkland." Part of what will be driving new protected areas, he says, will be those gaps.

However, AWA questions whether these targets are truly adequate to



N. Douglas

*While the new Parks plan will focus on upgrading facilities at existing parks, many Albertans would say their quality of life improves when they can escape human-made structures for slopes such as these in the White Goat Wilderness Area.*

protect our natural heritage. In some natural subregions, including the whole of the Rocky Mountain natural region, the government has reached 100 percent of its representation targets even though wide tracts of significant watersheds and wildlife habitat remain outside of protected areas and thus open to degradation through development.

There is also a need for functional corridors between protected areas. While the government refers to its “network of parks,” without secure lands connecting our wild places to one another, we have more of an archipelago than a network, with “ecological islands” cut off from one another by the surrounding human landscape. Filling in the representative gaps may offer increased refuge for localized environments, but without functional corridors we fail to safeguard the wildlife, water, and even plant species whose natural movement does not respect imposed human boundaries.

Jones says Parks will examine connecting the areas from an ecological perspective as well as a recreational opportunity but acknowledges that it may not be possible in all desired cases.

Once satisfactory representation and connectivity is achieved, we need to adequately staff and maintain our protected areas. Between 1995 and 2006, the area of Alberta’s parks increased almost 800 percent from a meagre 3,500 km<sup>2</sup> while the number of staff dropped 37 percent and the budget fell by 16 percent. The management of these areas is becoming increasingly difficult under tighter constraints in personnel and finances.

Alberta needs to increase the resources to manage the parks system alongside the designation of new and expanded areas. Whereas in 1995 there was one Parks staff member for every 4 km<sup>2</sup>, now that same single staff member represents 60 km<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, since 1995 the budget has decreased from \$12,850 per km<sup>2</sup> to a mere \$1,380 per km<sup>2</sup> in equivalent dollars.

Just days before this year’s official anniversary celebrations,

### Where the Money Goes

In late September, Tourism, Parks, Recreation, and Culture announced new capital funding of \$29.2 million to go toward upgrading Alberta’s parks and protected areas.

At the time of writing, \$21.4 million has been designated as follows:

#### **\$4.1 million went to parks in northeast and west-central Alberta.**

##### **Projects include the following:**

- Campground upgrades and campsite electrification in Cross Lake, Whitney Lakes and Moose Lake Provincial Parks, and in Franchere Bay Provincial Recreation Area
- Paving campground roads and parking lot in Wabamun Lake Provincial Park.

#### **\$4.9 million went to parks in southeast.**

##### **Projects include the following:**

- Upgrades to the visitor centre and shower facilities in Tillebrook Provincial Park
- Paving the day use and boat launch parking areas in Kinbrook Island Provincial Park
- Campground upgrades, pathway construction and road design in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

#### **\$12.4 million went to parks in Kananaskis Country.**

##### **Projects include the following:**

- Paving trails from Kananaskis Village to Wedge Pond in Evan-Thomas Provincial Recreation Area.
- Upgrading water and sewer systems in the Elbow River Valley and Peter Lougheed Provincial Parks.

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) released a report titled *The State of Alberta’s Parks and Protected Areas*. CPAWS states that the “systemic problems facing Alberta’s parks and protected areas are primarily due to a lack of sufficient political support and leadership.... Alberta is now ranked as having the weakest parks legislation in Canada.”

As Albertans, it is the responsibility of all of us to help protect our water sources and the wild places that stir our spirits. While TPRC is currently putting together its submission for the 2008 budget based on previous consultations with the public, it is still crucial that we let our government know what is personally important to us regarding the future of our parks.

In his December mandate letter to Minister Goudreau, Premier Stelmach

said, “We need to be out from behind our desks, listening to what is truly important to Albertans.” Let’s make sure we are also doing our part by telling them.

### What You Can Do

Learn more about Alberta’s Parks, Recreation, and Sport Division and the wild spaces it currently protects, as well as those important to protect in the future. Visit the Government of Alberta’s Parks website ([tprc.alberta.ca/parks](http://tprc.alberta.ca/parks)) and read the CPAWS *State of Alberta’s Parks* report ([cpaws-edmonton.org](http://cpaws-edmonton.org)).

Write to the Premier. Visit, call, or write your local MLA. Let them know how important Alberta’s wild places are to you and what your priorities are for the new Parks plan.



## WILDERNESS WANDERINGS – TRAVELS IN ALBERTA’S MOST PRECIOUS WILD SPACES

*By Nigel Douglas, AWA Conservation Specialist*

*“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”*

– John Muir

This summer, AWA staff had the privilege of visiting two of Alberta’s most spectacular wilderness areas. On the face of it, Willmore Wilderness north of Jasper and Suffield National Wildlife Area near Medicine Hat don’t have a great deal in common, but they both have a tremendous significance in AWA’s past history and in its future plans.



C. Olson

*Suffield National Wildlife Area is a land of broad sweeping prairies and endless horizons.*



N. Douglas

*This misty peak in the soft light of a Willmore morning was a welcome sight upon opening our tent flaps.*

### Willmore Wilderness

The Willmore is Alberta’s greatest remaining true wilderness, covering 460 km<sup>2</sup> of breathtaking mountain vistas, cascading crystal streams, and habitat for some of Alberta’s most spectacular wildlife: grizzlies, wolves, and the elusive woodland caribou.

AWA staff spent seven days in the Willmore in August this year, and it was a profoundly memorable experience. Whether it was the sight of skittish caribou always running on some mysterious errand, the contrast of a warming sun direct on the heels of a brief but spiteful hailstorm, or three wolves slinking guiltily away along an open hillside, there was always something new and exciting to encounter over the next ridge. Where else could you be two days’ hike from the nearest highway and bump into a cowboy with a horse on a lead rein in one hand and the newly released Harry Potter book in the other?

Without the startling abrupt peaks of Kananaskis, this part of the Willmore still left us with an impression of remoteness beyond anything experienced elsewhere in Alberta. Our host, Ray Rasmussen, who has traveled the Willmore for many years, describes it aptly as a “gentle, human-scale

wilderness.” Checking the maps on our return to civilization, we appreciated that we had only dipped our toes into the Willmore. We were left with the impression that we could explore it for years and still continue to be surprised by its beauty.

The Willmore Wilderness Park was created in 1959, but even in those heady days, “protection” was not necessarily enough. The Willmore continued to face demands for inappropriate resource development such as coal, forestry, oil and gas, and tourism. The early AWA came into its own in the early 1970s as it successfully mobilized the public to call for strengthened legislation to truly protect the Willmore from any industrial development, including tourism.

Even to this day, we have to be vigilant about maintaining its protection. The town of Grande Cache recently expressed its desire to build a ski hill in the Willmore, and there is constant pressure to open the area up to motorized access and to build private cabins. It seems that we can never relax for long: as AWA Director Vivian Pharis observed in the 1970s, “Development can lose battle after battle; wilderness can be lost only once.”

## Suffield National Wildlife Area

Suffield National Wildlife Area does not have the peaks and the sweeping ridges of the Willmore, but it is still a true wilderness area. It is a land of broad sweeping prairies and endless horizons, home to grassland specialists such as rattlesnakes, burrowing owls, and kangaroo rats.

AWA's bus trip to Suffield in July 2007 was a rare opportunity for our supporters to visit this breathtaking landscape, which, because it is part of the military base at CFB Suffield, is not open to the public. The lucky participants were left with glorious memories of a subtly dramatic environment with a surprising variety of natural habitats: a rattlesnake rattling its disgust from the depths of a sage bush; the ever-twisting South

Saskatchewan River flowing calmly past its honour guard of solemn cottonwood trees; the profound evening peace of the fading sun over the intricate system of coulees.

Suffield's history of protection is considerably more recent than the Willmore. The Suffield NWA was designated in 2003, following many years of concerted effort by a number of organizations (including AWA). This time it was not even three years before it became clear that, once again, "protection" was not enough. In October 2005, EnCana applied to drill 1,275 more gas wells in the newly protected National Wildlife Area, and the Alberta government is considering an approval of the project. Where else in the world could such a natural gem be treated with such disdain?

The battle over Suffield looks set to play out over the coming months as a coalition of environmental groups, including AWA, Nature Canada, Grassland Naturalists and the Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE), works to fend off this proposed desecration.

## Defending Wild Alberta

AWA will continue, as ever, to work toward protection as a tool for achieving better land management and appreciation of sensitive landscapes and wildlife. But we are not naïve enough to believe that protection in itself is enough. If there is one lesson that both Willmore and Suffield can teach us, it is that we must be continually vigilant when it comes to Alberta's unsurpassed wildlands. Wilderness in Alberta will always need defenders.



## MARIE LAKE REVERSAL OFFERS HOPE FOR MCCLELLAND FEN

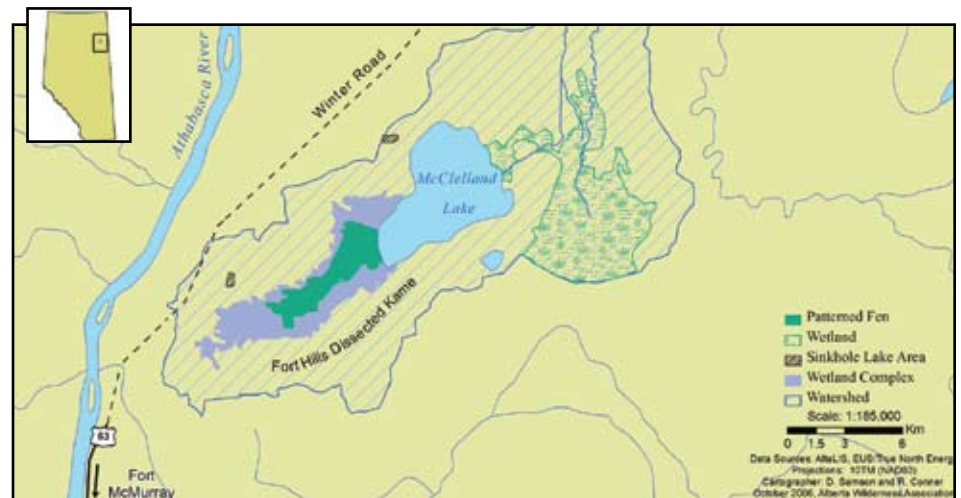
*By Joyce Hildebrand, AWA Conservation Specialist*

*"McClelland fen will serve as the lightning rod that focuses world attention on the ecological holocaust now taking place in the Surface Mineable Area of northeast Alberta."*

*- Dr. Richard Thomas*

The McClelland Lake fen, a spectacular landscape of delicately patterned peatland, is one of Alberta's most remote wild places. For 8,000 years, it has evolved at Nature's pace with little human impact. But without a government decision similar to the recent reversal of the Marie Lake seismic testing, the fen will be gone before the children born today have anything to say about it. And all for 0.033 percent of Alberta's recoverable bitumen, enough to supply Canada's needs for a little more than a year.

In August, Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) Minister Ted Morton approved seismic testing in Marie Lake, about 280 kilometres northeast of Edmonton. The proposed testing, which would involve shooting powerful blasts of air into this pristine lake, evoked an onslaught of public protest. Premier Stelmach responded to Albertans' concerns by putting a halt to the plan, overturning Morton's decision.



*Petro-Canada's plans include mining 45% of the patterned fen and 49% of the Wetland Complex. Approximately one-fifth of the bitumen in the lease lies within the McClelland watershed.*

According to CBC News, Morton had said he couldn't reverse the decision because government procedures had been followed. The Premier's decision, however, shows that not only can approvals be revisited and even reversed if they are seen

to be environmentally unsound and against the public interest, but also that government procedures are seriously flawed: mineral rights are leased without a public process and without consideration of surface impacts or rights.

If any decision should be revisited,

it's the 2002 approval of TrueNorth's (now Petro-Canada's) Fort Hills Oil Sands Project, which will mine half of the spectacular McClelland fen and the wetland complex of which it is the heart. This decision was made in the face of overwhelming evidence that the entire complex would be seriously compromised, if not destroyed. Furthermore, the events and process that led to the decision showed a complete lack of consideration for Albertans' environmental and social concerns (see WLA December 2006). Since only one-fifth of the bitumen in Petro-Canada's lease lies within the McClelland watershed, the



J. Rezac WWF-UK

*The irreplaceable McClelland Lake fen. "Although trees are now growing on about 5,000 hectares of land mined up to 40 years ago," says University of Alberta political scientist Dr. Ian Urquhart, "no ecologist would call these lands restored as boreal forest. It's impossible to recreate the boreal ecosystem."*

approval would not have to be entirely withdrawn to save the fen.

In August, Petro-Canada put forward an Amendment Application to the original Fort Hills project. According to their current proposal, the tailings pond will straddle the McClelland Lake watershed and will be operational by 2010. Mine operations will begin in 2011 and are expected to begin in the fen and wetland complex in 2023. But activity in the fen has already begun. Since 2001, Petro-Canada has drilled 1,008 exploratory holes in the Fort Hills area, including the fen and wetland complex. They have also removed rare plants from the portion of the fen that will be

mined, transplanting them in the other half of the fen. All of this despite "Alberta Environment's commitment to require TrueNorth to demonstrate its [mitigation] plans before any disturbance is allowed in the wetland complex" (EUB Decision 2002-089). No such plan has been demonstrated, and scientists such as peatlands expert Dr. Diana Horton believe that, given the hydrological and ecological complexity of the wetland complex, a valid mitigation plan is not achievable.

The 2002 EUB Decision states that, according to TrueNorth's application, "water quality in the unmined portion of the wetland and McClelland Lake would decline" due to the dewatering necessary for mining and the seepage from the tailings pond. "[P]eat-forming species would die and peat production would cease. A number of organic compounds ... were expected to concentrate downgradient. TrueNorth stated the effects of these organics on wetland vegetation are unknown." Despite these known and unknown effects, the portion of the Environmental Impact Assessment that applied to the fen and wetland complex was withdrawn at TrueNorth's request, and thus not considered in the EUB Decision.

At the 2002 hearing, the Government of Alberta agreed that mining "would directly disturb the mined portion and indirectly damage the unmined portion by altering water levels and elevating the concentrations of certain chemicals" and "that long-term changes in phytoplankton, zooplankton, and the macrophyte community were likely" (EUB Decision). But despite the potential for the destruction of fish habitat, a jurisdictional trigger necessitating a federal environmental assessment, the project was approved without one.

The Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) for the area – amended in 2002 to allow mining in the fen – states that surface mining in the complex will only be allowed if it can be done while "maintain[ing] the water table, water chemistry and water flow within limits as indicated by natural fluctuations to maintain ecosystem diversity and function of the McClelland Lake wetland complex where surface mining is not allowed." The McClelland

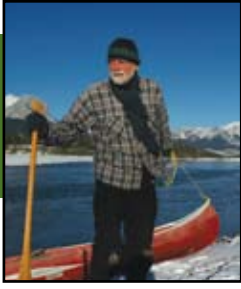
Lake Wetland Complex Sustainability Committee, a multi-stakeholder group convened by Petro-Canada in lieu of the withdrawn EIA portion, has the task of developing "a management strategy to sustain the unmined eastern portion of the wetland and thereby satisfy the requirements of the amended IRP" (EUB Decision).

Given that the fate of the fen, which belongs to all Albertans, lies largely with this Sustainability Committee, AWA believes that all documentation and activities related to this Committee – including Terms of Reference, meeting minutes, and remuneration to members – should be available to the Alberta public. AWA met with Petro-Canada in September 2006 and requested information about the Sustainability Committee and the transplanting program in the fen. Petro-Canada's August 2007 Amendment Application states that they are to provide AWA with updates on both, but despite five requests over the last year, we have not received this information.

In a July 2007 letter to AWA, SRD Minister Ted Morton wrote, "I understand Petro-Canada is working openly with stakeholders to ensure the protection of the lake and fen is assured." It appears that the Minister may be mistaken.

The EUB and Alberta Environment decided it was in the public interest to conduct this massive experiment, hoping that someday someone will figure out how to reclaim the fen. It is estimated that twice as much bitumen lies under Marie Lake as under the fen, and yet the Premier chose to make the difficult decision to halt the seismic testing.

If you want to help save the McClelland Lake fen, write to the Premier and visit, call, or write your local MLA. Ask that the 2002 approval of Fort Hills Oil Sands Project be amended so that the portion of Petro-Canada's lease that lies in the McClelland Lake watershed be removed from the project approval. To write a Statement of Concern about the project before the deadline of October 29, or for more information on the Amendment Application, go to [www.eub.ca](http://www.eub.ca) and search for Application No. 1520897.



## ALBERTA'S WAR ON WOLVES, THEN AND NOW

By Dick Dekker

*During the winters of 2005-07, crews under contract to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, shot a total of well over 100 wolves from helicopters in the Little Smoky foothills area northwest of Hinton. Shooting wildlife from aircraft is illegal in Canada, but provincial biologists justify the aerial hunt of the past two winters by claiming that it is intended to halt the decline of woodland caribou. Their specific goal is to protect the remaining herd northwest of Hinton from Canis lupus, the caribou's natural predator. Ironically, a major enemy of our woodland caribou is the Alberta government itself, which has pulled the rug from under the beleaguered ungulate by allowing resource industries to open up its old-growth forest habitat (see WLA June 2007).*

*To place the current campaign in perspective, the following is a historical review of past wolf control activities in Alberta. Based on professional research literature and the news media, it is also a personal viewpoint inspired by 43 years of first-hand wildlife observations in western Alberta.*

Alberta's on-again off-again war on wolves started soon after the arrival of the Europeans, who employed all available lethal means such as guns, traps, and poison. But what sealed the wolf's doom was the simultaneous destruction of its food base: hooved mammals. By the end of the nineteenth century, human greed had robbed western Canada of most of its wildlife that could either be eaten or sold as fur. Superimposed on the relentless hunting pressure was a series of extremely severe winters, which led to the starvation deaths of thousands of cattle as well as the last of Alberta's elk.

A gradual change for the better began with the enactment of game laws and the establishment of national parks. Deer, elk, and moose made a slow comeback, but the return of the wolf was seen with misgivings. During the 1940s, they were trapped or shot on sight, even in Banff and Jasper National Parks.

During 1952-55, the war on wolves was stepped up a notch. The stated reason was that rabies had been identified in a northern Alberta fox. To prevent the feared disease from spreading southward, the province unleashed the most intensive poisoning campaign ever, anytime and anywhere. With the intention of exterminating all wild canids in a wide buffer zone around human settlements, government agents distributed nearly one million units of cyanide and strychnine to trappers and landowners. The number



R. Berdan

of sodium fluoro-acetate (ten-eighty) bait stations increased to 800 in the final year of the campaign. An official tally of the victims was 5,200 wolves, 171,000 coyotes, and 55,000 foxes. Non-target predators and scavengers that ate from the poison baits were decimated as well, including martens, lynxes, bears, eagles, and ravens.

A more respectful era for wildlife dawned during the 1960s. Among the increasingly urban public, nature appreciation grew and embraced all of our warm-blooded fellow creatures, including the formerly despised and persecuted carnivores. Celebrated in magazines, books, and films, the big bad wolf of lore went through a complete metamorphosis and became

as popular and beloved as Bambi.

Attitudes among professional wildlife managers changed as well. Their slogan became "Let it be." In a well-balanced ecosystem, large predators were said to function as agents of health, weeding out the weak and infirm among their prey species. From 1966 onward, western Alberta's wolves were allowed to stage a spontaneous recovery, and they did so with a vengeance because of the abundant prey base. Family packs grew in number and size, repopulating all former range and dispersing into adjacent farmlands. There, the setting of poison baits became a common routine for Fish and Wildlife officers. Hunters, however, had little reason to





B. Genereux

*In western Canada, wolves vary in pelage colour from jet black to silver and white. Blacks make up 35 to 70 percent of the population, which suggests that the common name “gray wolf” is a misnomer.*

complain. Due to the previous scarcity of predators, coupled with mild winters, hoofed mammals were not hard to find on wilderness lands, and permits were generous.

The armistice in the war on wolves barely lasted a decade. The pendulum of tolerance would soon swing the other way again, prompted by Mother Nature herself. At her seemingly unpredictable whims, wildlife communities are subject to cyclical highs and lows. In the mid-1960s, and particularly in 1973-74, herbivores were hit hard by severe winters. Food-stressed and harassed by expanding numbers of wolves, bears, and cougars, the productivity of elk and moose collapsed. Eventually, they dwindled to a fraction of what they had been a few years earlier.

After many detailed field studies on predation, the theories of provincial wildlife managers came full circle. Too many wolves were killing too many hoofed mammals, they said, in direct competition with human hunters and outfitters. Calls for remedial action became increasingly demanding. For instance, on December 29, 1982, the *Edmonton Journal* ran a story under the headline “Wolf population explosion raises howls for controls.”

The war on wolves resumed full blast during the 1980s, beginning in Alaska and Yukon. British Columbia soon followed. The objectives were straightforward: to make more venison and trophies available for human hunters on wilderness lands. However, this time around, government biologists

shied away from using poison baits. Instead, they reverted to a method considered more selective and humane: search and destroy with helicopter gunships, reminiscent of the Vietnam jungle war.

### **The Power of Public Protest**

The imagery of government personnel shotgunning a spooked pack of wolves from the air shocked a largely non-hunting public and sparked a tidal wave of protest in the national and international media. It led to a frenzy of demonstrations in California and tourism boycotts in Alaska. But despite an escalating chorus of protest, led by environmental crusader Paul Watson, regional biologists in British Columbia persisted in shooting wolves. However, in the spring of 1986, they were quite suddenly reined in by their political masters. The stop order followed on the heels of a press release by Friends of the Wolf and their American affiliates, who announced that they were planning a major tourism boycott at Expo 86, to be held in Vancouver that summer.

To calm the turmoil and debate, the University of British Columbia, in partnership with government and private conservation groups, organized a wolf management symposium in May 1988. In a terse presentation, provincial biologist Dr. John Elliott reported that he had personally shot 996 wolves from the air over two winters. Now, barely three years after the carnage, he considered his efforts to have been a waste of time. The wolves were back at their former strength. The total expenditures of the campaign were in the order of \$2,500 to \$3,000 per wolf. Similarly high costs were reported by the equally candid biologists from Alaska.

In Alaska, support for the controversial wolf kills had come mainly from people who were concerned about the shrinking inventory of moose, a subsistence staple in this northern state. However, the Canadian focus was mainly on woodland caribou. A Yukon biologist – in defence of a regional wolf cull – stated that the economic importance of caribou, in pounds of meat, was greater than the monetary value of wolf fur sold.

Another, more convincing argument was raised in B.C., where researchers claimed that local populations of woodland caribou were especially hit hard. The reason was that alpine habitats, formerly the exclusive domain of caribou, were increasingly invaded by moose, which in turn attracted more wolves. Furthermore, predation pressure was believed to be proportionally heavier on caribou than on moose. The only way to save the remaining caribou from extinction, the researchers warned, was to reduce the number of predators. This view soon became the mantra of government wildlife biologists in Alberta.

### **The Debate Heats Up**

The fuse for the current wolf control campaign was lit 20 years ago, when the *Calgary Herald* (November 4, 1986) ran a news item under the headline “Report outlines plan for major wolf kill.” It was based on a leaked and confidential government document titled “Restoration Plan for Woodland Caribou in Alberta.” The report’s author, biologist Janet Edmonds of the Edson Fish and Wildlife Division, wrote that a herd of migratory caribou that summered in the alpine regions of Jasper and Willmore Wilderness Parks had dwindled from an estimated 1,600-1,800 in 1968 to less than 300 in 1986.

The report outlined a number of causes for the decline, but it failed to place the population fluctuation in a historical and realistic perspective. Edmonds did not explain that the high caribou numbers of 1968 were related to the extreme wolf poisoning campaigns of the 1950s. The resulting scarcity of predators in combination with a decade of mild winters had led to a cyclic high in ungulate prey species – not only caribou, but also moose and elk. Furthermore, the down cycle in the 1980s was natural and to be expected given a series of very cold winters and the resurgence of the once decimated wolves.

In 1986, soon after Edmond’s “Caribou Restoration Plan” had been broadcast by the media, the Honourable Don Sparrow – then Alberta’s Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife – began receiving an avalanche of letters condemning the proposed wolf cull.



C. Olson

*Caribou track in Willmore Wilderness. If left alone, large predators like wolves and their ungulate prey work out a numerical adjustment. Their ecologies are intertwined in a dynamic equilibrium, driven by a combination of factors, including habitat, weather conditions, and disease. Hunting by humans is superimposed on the wildlife equation and may lead to conflicts that can be difficult to resolve.*

On December 4, 1986, the Sierra Club of Canada organized a protest meeting at the Calgary Auditorium. The star attraction was famous author Farley Mowat. After his hard-hitting presentation, the supportive audience of more than 1,000 was shown the film *Never Cry Wolf*.

The meeting received wide coverage on provincial and national television, which contributed to the government's early capitulation. The controversy ended as abruptly as it had begun. On January 9, 1987, the minister announced that the wolf kill was not going ahead and had only been a last resort. In a newspaper interview, Don Sparrow expressed his personal dislike for the plan: "Shooting wolves from a helicopter is too much like shooting fish in a barrel." A departmental spokesman was quick to point out that the minister's remarks were only "hypothetical."

Nevertheless, the wolf controversy did not die. In March 1988, the University of Alberta invited the notorious activist Paul Watson to speak at a public meeting in Edmonton. Formerly with the crew of Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior*, Watson was now captain of the *Sea Shepherd*, and his current topic was the fight for whales, dolphins, and baby

seals. However, a year or two earlier, he had played a pivotal role in halting the infamous government wolf kills in British Columbia. Following Watson's address, John Stelfox, a senior Alberta biologist who had personally poisoned wolves in the 1950s and 1960s, bluntly told the speaker that he was not welcome in this province. Notwithstanding, throughout the mostly hostile, two-hour question period, Captain Watson remained courteous, and his replies often earned him the applause of the public. Later that evening, at an informal get-together with local members of the Canadian Wolf Defenders, this "environmental guerrilla," as the press labelled him, proved to be a very gentle soul.

### **The Wolf as Competitor**

Behind the scenes, demands for wolf control remained strong in hunting circles. At its 1988 annual convention, the 17,000-member Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA) passed a resolution urging the government to cull wolves in the foothills, with the ultimate goal of enhancing elk populations. In response, LeRoy Fjordbotten – the new minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife – hinted that wolf control might be given over to private interests. A government

biologist had informed the minister that the province's estimated 5,000 wolves were taking down 50,000 hoofed animals annually.

The following year, frustrated by continued government inaction on the wolf issue, AFGA came up with an idea of its own. Based on the most recent data, Alberta's total wolf population was said to be between 3,500 and 5,500, and the average yearly take by registered trappers was 500 wolves. AFGA wanted to boost that number to 1,200. To that end, they would pay trappers a bonus of \$150 per wolf. AFGA's executive director, Lyle Fullerton, said that only a fringe element of society would oppose such a plan. As it happened, one of the first people to turn down AFGA's offer was Minister Fjordbotten himself.

The scheme raised a chorus of protest among the general public, reverberating across Canada and beyond. "Stop the Wolf Bounty" became the slogan of a new Alberta group, Friends of the Wolf. On February 3, 1989, they organized a protest rally and march to the Alberta Legislature, which received considerable press coverage. Members of the Canadian Wolf Defenders, low key and well informed, collected a petition with over 30,000 signatures, which they presented in person to Minister Fjordbotten.

The minister shrugged off the wolf worries with an indulgent smile. At the time, his department had more important business at hand. Alberta was signing away the cutting rights to thousands of square miles of boreal forest, with ominous but unmentioned implications for all of its wild denizens, including wolves.

As it turned out, the AFGA scheme fizzled. Due to a shortage of donations for the bounty proposal, the bonus was reduced from \$150 to \$100 per wolf and the target lowered to a maximum of 50 payments.

### **Public Interest Peaks**

The flames of public indignation over the never-ending wolf complaints were fanned on January 18, 1990, when the *Edmonton Journal* ran the headline "Alberta ponders killing up to 1,200 wolves to free up game for hunters." Journalist Don Thomas based

his information on a leaked government document titled “Draft Management Plan for Wolves.” The plan mentioned the intended use of aerial gunning to eliminate wolves near Grande Cache and along the boundaries of Banff and Jasper National Parks.

On February 8, 1990, to expose the long-festering issue to public scrutiny, I organized an open forum and panel discussion at the Alberta Provincial Museum. Local members of Canadian Wolf Defenders distributed posters throughout the city and the meeting drew the largest crowd ever to gather at the museum. The 400-seat auditorium was filled to capacity. In addition, an estimated 150 people had to follow the proceedings in the foyer via closed-circuit television. Many others were turned back at the door or unable to enter the parking lot. The six panel members included two senior zoologists from the University of Alberta, the executive director of AFGA, the Deputy Minister of Alberta Wildlife, and the president of the Alberta Federation of Naturalists. I represented the Canadian Wolf Defenders on the panel. The moderator was Garnet Anthony, a well-known CBC radio personality as well as a knowledgeable conservationist.

After a brief introduction, the floor was open to the public lining up at the microphones. Their comments and questions were lively, informative, and often humorous. Ranging from computer programmers to crusty old trappers, from articulate politicians to bright-voiced schoolchildren, the audience comprised a wide spectrum of Albertans. Perhaps not surprisingly, the most passionate voice protesting government wolf kills and pleading for more protection of our wildlands came from a young member of AFGA. The meeting ended with a showing of the film *Following the Tundra Wolf*, narrated by Robert Redford.

### Why No Public Protest Today?

During the winter of 2005-06, twenty years after the start of the caribou controversy, the Alberta government unexpectedly went into action, ordering its hired staff to shoot wolves from the air in the hill country northwest of Hinton. On March 5, 2006, the *Edmonton*

*Journal* included a feature story by Ed Struzik, “Alberta’s war on wolves,” in which he interviewed half a dozen independent wildlife experts. All of them condemned the wolf cull as futile and a waste of time, money, and animal lives. Like similar campaigns in other jurisdictions, once the killing ended, the wolves were predicted to bounce back to larger numbers than before.

It’s perplexing that – quite different from 20 years ago – the public has been silent on the issue. Why? Have we become immune to the wanton killing of animals on wilderness lands, like we have become inured to the killing of innocent citizens on foreign soil, as long as we believe that the war is just?

Propaganda experts advise that to get public opinion on side, in politics and advertising, a lie can be repeated until it is taken for the truth. The oft-stated rationale behind the current wolf kill is that the woodland caribou is on the road to extinction unless we protect it from its archenemy, the wolf. Therefore, so says the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, the predators need to be controlled.

But wait a minute! The fact is that Alberta’s wolves have never been completely out of control. Hunters bag them at every opportunity, and trappers “harvest” them for their valuable pelt. In our foothill forests, some wolf packs are hit hard by secretive capture methods. A common practice is to dump the carcasses of traffic-killed deer and moose at bait stations hidden in the bush. After the wolves have become habituated to a free meal at these sites, the local trapper closes off all narrow access trails with metal snares. This has resulted in the capture of entire family packs, milling about in confusion until all members are choking to death. Such hidden tragedies take place each winter near the boundaries of Jasper National Park, unbeknownst to the general public and sanctioned by the government departments that supply the carcasses. Rumour has it that some trappers have even had the gall to ask park staff for their road kills.

### In My Opinion

In its wisdom, the Alberta government closed the hunting season on woodland caribou in 1980. Although

N. Douglas



*Wolf tracks near Upper Kananaskis Lake.*

poaching, road accidents, aboriginal and Metis hunting, and hunter error in animal identification contribute to caribou deaths, the most important and largely indirect peril confronting the caribou is the fragmentation of its winter habitat. Timber clearcuts, coupled with increasing human access on roads and trails built by the petroleum and forest industries, are the main causes of habitat degradation. It is in this critical realm that governments can do much to mitigate negative impacts on caribou and other wildlife.

In the past 30 years, the commercial deforestation of our foothills and boreal north has spread and intensified, bringing tears to the eyes of all who love wild nature. Where will the destruction end? Will it result in irreparable damage to the ecosystem? No doubt certain species will be lost, but perhaps there is hope for partial recovery or even some gains. Through responsible management, the clearcut and scarified ground left could behind become a future paradise for deer, elk, and moose, as well as their predators.

To boreal zoologists the reclusive woodland caribou is affectionately known as “the grey ghost of the northwoods.” As to its current predicament, one of Mother Nature’s edicts is that life is ever evolving. Animals that are unable to adapt to a

changing habitat will be replaced by other species. Ever since the last ice age, long before humans entered the equation, the southern limit of caribou range has been shifting farther north. This trend might well speed up if global climate warming continues. The woodland caribou’s official designation as a threatened species requires that government agencies take measures to limit further losses. One immediate consequence has been that costly aerial research has been stepped up with most of the money ending up in the pockets of aircraft companies. Stan Boutin, one of Alberta’s foremost large mammal biologists, was recently quoted in the *Edmonton Journal* as wondering aloud, “I don’t know if there is any point in spending millions of dollars ... trying to save the Little Smoky caribou herd when the chances of success are minimal.”

In the final analysis, all we – as defenders of wild lands – can do, is to continue pressing for protection of caribou habitat. At the same time, we

must be pragmatic enough to accept the fact that some remnant herds may be on the way out. Others will no doubt manage to survive. It is good to remember that the grey ghost has been around for eons, and all it needs from us is to be left alone.

*For more information, see the author’s 1997 book, Wolves of the Rocky Mountains, from Jasper to Yellowstone (Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House).*

*Dick Dekker, a naturalist born in Holland, immigrated to Canada in 1959 in search of true wilderness. He has written 10 books as well as numerous articles and research papers. From 1960 onwards, he has been an outspoken defender of wolves and habitat conservation.*

AWA recently received unconfirmed reports that the Alberta government is planning a substantial wolf cull east of Banff National Park this winter. Aerial shooting is the preferred method, although poisoning, complete with its risk of incidental deaths of other wildlife, could be used instead.

## ALBERTA’S ROYALTY REVIEW – DOES THE GOVERNMENT HAVE THE COURAGE TO ACT ON ITS RECOMMENDATIONS?

The Government of Alberta is asking Albertans to comment on its recently released Royalty Review. As always, AWA encourages people to make the most of opportunities such as this, to comment on an issue which is likely to have far-reaching consequences for management of our natural resources, including wilderness.

The review states clearly that “Albertans do not receive their fair share from energy development and they have not, in fact, been receiving

their fair share for quite some time.” Alberta’s oil and gas resources belong to all Albertans and the report emphasizes that “there is an absence of accountability from the government to the owners of the resource.”

This promises to be a defining moment in the career of Premier Stelmach. It is an opportunity for him to demonstrate clearly whose interests his government is representing. If it is truly representing Albertans then it will implement the review

recommendations in their entirety; if we end up with a watered down, phased-in version, it will send a very clear message about who is really in charge.

*You can comment on-line at gov.ab.ca.*

*To view the Royalty Review, go to: [www.albertaroyaltyreview.ca/panell/final\\_report.pdf](http://www.albertaroyaltyreview.ca/panell/final_report.pdf)*

# INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE CASTLE'S FRONT RANGE CANYONS

By Reg Ernst

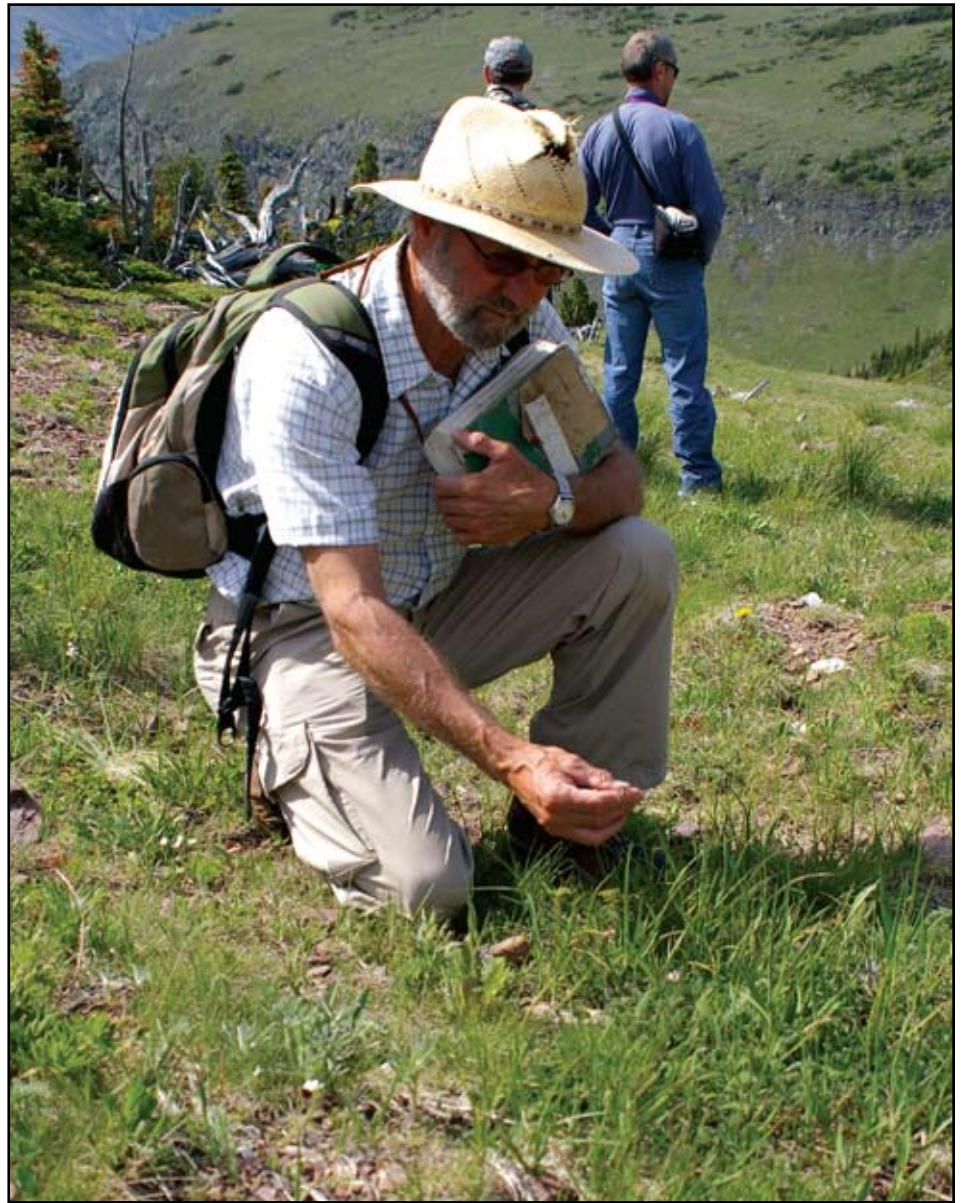
The five east-west parallel Front Range Canyons in the Castle are a significant feature of southwestern Alberta because of their unique topographical and climatic features.

Strong funneling winds create diverse ecological conditions that provide important habitat for a variety of floral and faunal species. Geographically, the canyons extend from the Waterton Lakes National Park (WLNP) boundary north for about 25 km and encompass natural regions starting with the Montane and terminating in the Alpine.

Early oil and gas exploration, off-highway vehicle (OHV) activity, and more recently, livestock grazing have caused substantial changes to plant communities along the linear disturbance left by seismic work and other industrial activities. Most of the invading non-native plant species are tame forage species such as Timothy (*Phleum pratense*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), and clovers (*Trifolium spp.*), but weeds are also a major problem. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and tall buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) are listed as noxious under *Alberta's Weed Control Act* and both are common and on some sites abundant in the mid reaches of the Front Range Canyons.

Presently, little if any attention is paid to the problem of non-native plant species in the mid to upper reaches of the Front Range Canyons. On many sites at lower elevations, the weeds are so well established that it is doubtful whether there would ever be enough resources to eliminate or control them. There is still time, however, to restrict the non-native and weedy species from invading the higher elevations. The resources required to limit their spread should be relatively modest compared to mitigating their impact after they become established.

As one travels from the uppermost gas well sites in the Front Range Canyons into the alpine, non-



*Botanist Reg Ernst conducting invasive species surveys in the Castle during the summer of 2007.*

native species gradually become less abundant. It may be because the non-native species have not yet adapted to the cooler climate at higher elevations, or it may be because they just haven't had time to reach the higher elevations. If it is climate related, global warming may allow non-native and weedy species to colonize areas previously unavailable to them. In any case, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) felt it would be useful to know

the distribution and abundance of non-native plants in the Front Range Canyons so their progress could be monitored and mitigation measures could be put in place to prevent their further spread.

To determine the linear distribution and upper limit of non-native and weedy species, the four Front Range Canyons – Yarrow, Spionkop, South Drywood, and Pincher – were surveyed. The project area

was along the riparian corridors and extended upstream from the uppermost Shell infrastructure to the alpine. The surveys were carried out during July 2007 and with the support of the Alberta Conservation Association and Shell Canada.

Starting at the uppermost Shell infrastructure of each of the four Front Range Canyons surveyed, the existing linear disturbance (mainly old truck and seismic trails) was walked until no more non-native species were encountered. For each non-native species encountered, location information and relative abundance were recorded.

In Yarrow Canyon, thirteen non-native species were recorded: seven are agronomic, two are nuisance weeds, two are unregulated weeds, and the remaining two are noxious weeds. Timothy and Kentucky bluegrass are the most common and more or less continuous along the trail to the upper limit of cattle grazing (i.e., the fence across the upper canyon). Tall buttercup and Canada thistle are limited mainly to moist meadows. The proliferation of non-native species and the many impacted cattle trails scattered throughout the forested and grassland areas in Yarrow Canyon are indicators of heavy use by cattle.

Six species of invasive plants were found in Spionkop. Timothy

and Kentucky bluegrass are the most common non-native species; tall buttercup and Canada thistle are particularly abundant in one wet meadow. The many heavily impacted cattle trails throughout the forested areas and ranging into the alpine indicate that cattle are having major impacts in upper Spionkop Canyon.

Ten non-native plants were found in South Drywood Canyon. It is the only Front Range Canyon that still receives OHV use. The non-native species present are likely from both cattle grazing and OHV use. In the past, grazing took place around Bovin Lake and up into the alpine, but fencing now restricts cattle from getting into those areas.

Of the canyons surveyed, Pincher had the fewest non-native plants and showed the least amount of impact from cattle grazing. The upper limit of invasive plants was where the trail entered the forested area which appeared to coincide with the upper limit of cattle use. The two noxious weeds were found near the trailhead.

AWA was able to make four specific recommendations at the conclusion of the study:

1. Although the primary focus of weed control should be on those listed as noxious, all weedy species should be removed. This includes annual brome grass (*Bromus tectorum*), which is listed as a nuisance weed

but is considered by some to be the most unmanageable and invasive weed in southern Alberta.

2. The grazing situation along the riparian corridor in Yarrow Canyon should be reviewed. The existing bare soil from trampling along the stream corridor and from the extensive trail system into the forested areas will inevitably lead to an increase in weeds and non-native plants.
3. There is no practical way of removing agronomic species from the Front Range Canyons, but they can be controlled to some extent by proper grazing practices. Weeds, however, can and should be removed. Annual inspections and weed control should become part of managing all the riparian corridors in the Front Range Canyons.
4. The upper portion of Spionkop Canyon should be fenced off to prevent cattle use in the upper subalpine and alpine areas. This will help to reduce the spread of weeds and non-native plants in those areas.

Clearly the habitat provided by the Front Range Canyons for both wildlife and rare plants is being threatened, making active control measures important to conserve what remains. The complete report is available on AWA's website at [www.AlbertaWilderness.ca](http://www.AlbertaWilderness.ca).

## IAN URQUHART – DEFENDING WILDERNESS FROM ON HIGH

By Aaron Davies

When asked what he enjoys about his career in the ivory tower, Ian Urquhart replies, "Students. Their enthusiasm and their belief that they can make a difference are infectious." Given his articulate critiques of provincial politics and his obvious passion for his work, I would bet that the effect is mutual. Confirmation came when his students nominated him for a Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Teaching Award, which he received this year.

Beneath Ian's soft-spoken exterior is an uncompromising commitment to speak the truth about Alberta's current political climate, and in particular, about how it has affected what is so important to him and countless other Albertans: wilderness. In November, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) will add the Wilderness Defenders Award to Ian's many accomplishments.

Growing up in Trail, B.C., Ian took advantage of the many opportunities for outdoor activities in the West Kootenays. He was raised

at a time when parents were not as worried about their children's safety as they are now. "We took advantage of that freedom," he says, reminiscing about chasing grouse and sitting around the campfire. Most of his vivid nature memories stem from hunting and fishing. "I loved the sense of being away from it all."

At the age of 22, Ian earned a B.A. from UBC. After a stint as a member's research assistant in the House of Commons, he earned a Masters degree at Queen's University.



C. Olson

*Ian Urquhart taking a break in the boreal beauty of Lakeland, northeast of Edmonton.*

He then returned to UBC for his PhD and began his career in political science at the University of Alberta, where he has been teaching political science since 1987. His main interests lie in Canadian and comparative resource/environmental policy, federalism, and constitutional politics.

Ian's teaching excellence is matched by his writing skills. He can be counted on for finding just the right creative metaphor to get his point across. His 2002 Parkland Institute monograph, *Making It Work: Kyoto, Trade, and Politics*, deflates the critics of the Kyoto Protocol. He co-authored the *The Last Great Forest: Japanese Multinationals and Alberta's Northern Forests* (1994) and edited and contributed to *Assault on the Rockies: Environmental Controversies in Alberta* (1998), a collection of essays. In these

works and elsewhere, he allows diverse voices to explore the tension between the need to make a living and the need to preserve the basis of that living.

Ian suspects that although Albertans say that they value wilderness, they believe it is more plentiful than it is. Another serious misconception in this province is that wilderness protection is necessarily bad for business. "We need to overcome the prejudice that insists that wilderness protection is bad for economic growth. Environmental amenities are very important to the decisions people make about where they want to live and work. Wilderness is one of those amenities."

Ian began his work with AWA in 2002 when Vivian Pharis asked him to join the board. Arguably with some understatement, Ian suggests that

"Vivian's not a person who is easy to turn down." Earlier, in writing about the Cheviot mine project, Ian had argued that conservation organizations (in this case, including AWA) did not consider seriously enough the futures of people who work at places like the coal mines south of Hinton. This got Ian into some hot water with other environmental organizations, but he was impressed with AWA's willingness to accept criticism.

AWA later contracted Ian to work in the Primrose-Lakeland area northeast of Edmonton. Conservationists in the Lac La Biche community respect him for his diligence in pursuing conservation goals while showing consideration for local traditions like hunting, fishing, and trapping. Ian believes that everyone's interests can be accommodated while still protecting the core wilderness values of Lakeland.

Despite the rapid expansion of industrial growth in Alberta, Ian sees light at the end of the tunnel: "The erosion of declared Tory support and sharp rise in the numbers of us who are 'undecided' offers wilderness protection advocates a tremendous opportunity to press our issues." Controversies such as the Marie Lake incident, he says, suggest that Albertans are finally becoming more aware of the threats to our wild places. However, he also believes that if we do not act quickly, most of Alberta's intact landscapes will be sacrificed on the altar of economic growth.

Still deeply involved in a fulfilling career that allows him to travel, write, and teach, Ian shows no signs of slowing down. He hopes to have a book on the tar sands finished by spring 2008, after which he plans to turn his critical eye on the coal bed methane issue. He is particularly interested in the grassroots opposition emerging from landowners.

Being a defender of wilderness comes naturally to Ian. As "more and more landscapes in Alberta taste the steel of drill bits," as he puts it, his commitment to fair and accurate critique, and to a conservation ethic is as much a part of him as his self-deprecating nature and his love of Alberta's wild places.

## THE GENESIS OF A BOOK – *WILD ALBERTA AT THE CROSSROADS*

By Robin and Marian White

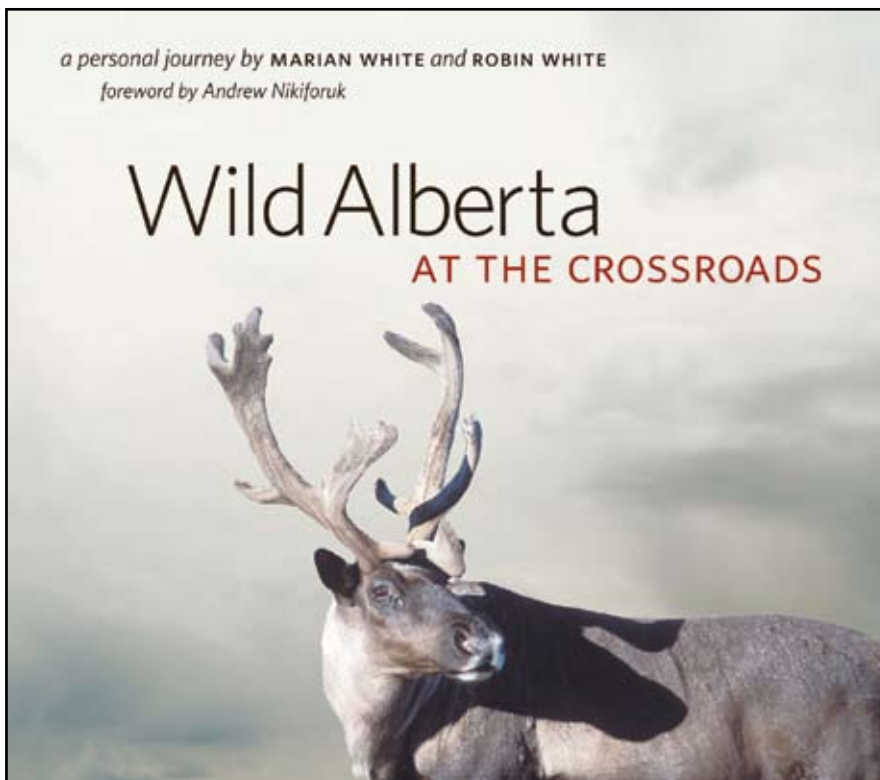
For most of us writing is hard work, and producing and publishing a 192-page book – half text, half pictures – requires considerable time, effort, and cost. So why do it?

We left England in 1968, arriving in Canada two years later after a series of shoe-string journeys through the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America. Those early travels through some of the poorest countries in the world marked a profound turning point in our lives. They opened our eyes to the natural beauty and diversity of the planet while teaching us what is important in life. In 1975 we made Alberta our new home.

A second turning point came two years later. While retreating in poor weather from Mount Robson, Robin's climbing party was swept off a steep slope by an avalanche. By a miracle no one was killed, but injury left Robin unable to walk properly for a year. Forced to slow our pace, we began to take a deep interest in the nature around us. Rope and ice-axes gave way to binoculars and cameras. Sitting in a blind for hours watching wildlife, or lying on our bellies in alpine meadows waiting for the wind to drop to photograph wildflowers gave ample time to appreciate the subtleties of nature.

Fast forward 20 years. Metamorphosed into amateur naturalists and conservationists, we became aware of two facts. First, many Albertans don't seem to appreciate how lucky we are to live here. In Britain, wilderness hangs by a thread. Bear, wolf, and lynx are long gone, and many wild bird populations have shrunk to half their 1970 numbers. By contrast, most of the large mammals that were around 150 years ago in Alberta, including the large carnivores, are still here.

But today, more books celebrating Alberta aren't needed, for the second obvious fact is that Albertans generally are poor custodians of their environment. While much of the



*On December 4, Marian and Robin White will share their images and experiences in our Tuesday Talks series (see page 30 for details). Their book will be available for purchase – just in time for Christmas!*

province is being transformed into an industrial wasteland of pump-jacks, seismic lines, clearcuts, open-pit mines, and urban sprawl, most Albertans look meekly on. Certainly we are all partly to blame. Most of us can, and should, do more to reduce our ecological footprint. But an individual cannot create parks, protect watersheds, or regulate industrial pollution. We delegate that to government and overwhelmingly it has failed. Why? Largely because of political ideology, but partly because politicians, generally, take the view that they are only elected for four years, and they prefer to avoid actions that might affect jobs, increase taxes, or limit people's choices.

Consequently, Albertans are now at a moral crossroads. At a time when climate change and over-consumption are causing catastrophe, particularly in many of the world's poorest nations, this province seems content to

have one of the worst records in the industrial world for per capita energy and resource consumption, and greenhouse gas production. Furthermore, addicted to endless growth, we are led by a premier who vows not to apply the brake.

More responsible policies will come only when an informed public cares enough to demand them. So we have targeted our book at the general public and devoted the first and larger part, "Exploring Wild Alberta," to encouraging readers to experience first-hand the glory of this province. The second part, "At the Crossroads," describes some of the systemic problems where major policy changes are needed. In "Finding the Path," examples are given of exciting initiatives by Albertans who aren't just wringing their hands but are taking direct action, typically in concert with others, to forge a more sustainable



future. The final chapter, "Getting Started," provides lists of resources for re-establishing a connection with nature. Investigative journalist Andrew Nikiforuk has written an excellent, thought-provoking foreword.

Some have asked us what it's like "writing a book." For seven years, we spent six months of the year living in our eight-foot truck-camper. In weather ranging from +42°C to 35 below, we waited patiently to gain the trust of wildlife so we could capture animal behaviour on film and in fieldnotes. We conducted extensive secondary research and contacted many biologists to learn what to see where, and how to interpret what we saw.

Then we spent a year writing and rewriting, followed by the decision to self-publish after turning down



*Marian and Robin White*

two publishers' offers. We have been utterly blessed with the excellence of the team that came together: Frances Hunter designed the book, cartography

teacher Robin Poitras produced the gorgeous maps, and the AWA's own Joyce Hildebrand proved an editor par excellence. We are now going through the nerve-wracking experience of dealing with the printing house. Advance copies should arrive in late October, and the mass of books a month later.

*Wild Alberta at the Crossroads will be published by NatureWatch Press and will be available in December 2007.*

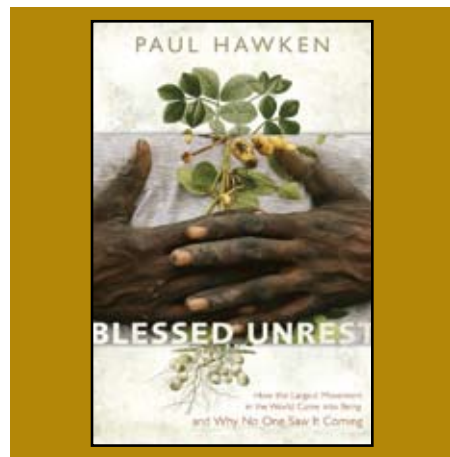
## TO REMAKE THE WORLD – SOMETHING EARTH-CHANGING IS AFOOT AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY

*By Paul Hawken*

*Paul Hawken is an entrepreneur and social activist living in California. This article is adapted from his latest book, Blessed Unrest.*

I have given nearly one thousand talks about the environment in the past fifteen years, and after every speech a smaller crowd gathered to talk, ask questions, and exchange business cards. The people offering their cards were working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights, and more. They were from the nonprofit and nongovernmental world, also known as civil society. They looked after rivers and bays, educated consumers about sustainable agriculture, retrofitted houses with solar panels, lobbied state legislatures about pollution, fought against corporate-weighted trade policies, worked to green inner cities, or taught children about the environment. Quite simply, they were trying to safeguard nature and ensure justice.

After being on the road for a week or two, I would return with a couple hundred cards stuffed into various



pockets. I would lay them out on the table in my kitchen, read the names, look at the logos, envisage the missions, and marvel at what groups do on behalf of others. Later, I would put them into drawers or paper bags, keepsakes of the journey. I couldn't throw them away.

Over the years the cards mounted into the thousands, and whenever I glanced at the bags in my closet, I

kept coming back to one question: did anyone know how many groups there were? At first, this was a matter of curiosity, but it slowly grew into a hunch that something larger was afoot, a significant social movement that was eluding the radar of mainstream culture.

I began to count. I looked at government records for different countries and, using various methods to approximate the number of environmental and social justice groups from tax census data, I initially estimated that there were thirty thousand environmental organizations strung around the globe; when I added social justice and indigenous organizations, the number exceeded one hundred thousand. I then researched past social movements to see if there were any equal in scale and scope, but I couldn't find anything. The more I probed, the more I unearthed, and the numbers continued to climb.

In trying to pick up a stone, I found the exposed tip of a geological formation. I discovered lists, indexes, and small databases specific to certain sectors or geographic areas, but no set of data came close to describing the movement's breadth. Extrapolating from the records being accessed, I realized that the initial estimate of a hundred thousand organizations was off by at least a factor of ten. I now believe there are over one million organizations working toward ecological sustainability and social justice. Maybe two.

By conventional definition, this is not a movement. Movements have leaders and ideologies. You join movements, study tracts, and identify yourself with a group. You read the biography of the founder(s) or listen to them perorate on tape or in person. Movements have followers, but this movement doesn't work that way. It is dispersed, inchoate, and fiercely independent. There is no manifesto or doctrine, no authority to check with.

I sought a name for it, but there isn't one.

Historically, social movements have arisen primarily because of injustice, inequalities, and corruption. Those woes remain legion, but a new condition exists that has no precedent: the planet has a life-threatening disease that is marked by massive ecological degradation and rapid climate change. It crossed my mind that perhaps I was seeing something organic, if not biologic. Rather than a movement in the conventional sense, is it a collective response to threat? Is it splintered for reasons that are innate to its purpose? Or is it simply disorganized? More questions followed. How does it function? How fast is it growing? How is it connected? Why is it largely ignored?

After spending years researching this phenomenon, including creating with my colleagues a global database of these organizations, I have come to these conclusions: this is the largest social movement in all of history, no one knows its scope, and how it functions is more mysterious than what meets the eye.

What does meet the eye is compelling: tens of millions of ordinary and not-so-ordinary people



*Citizens gathered at an April 2007 rally outside the Government of Alberta offices in Calgary to express their concerns about industry's footprint on Alberta's Eastern Slopes.*

willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world.

Clayton Thomas-Müller speaks to a community gathering of the Cree nation about waste sites on their native land in Northern Alberta, toxic lakes so big you can see them from outer space. Shi Lihong, founder of Wild China Films, makes documentaries with her husband on migrants displaced by construction of large dams. Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez, a member of the Maya-Kaqchikel people, fights for full accountability for tens of thousands of people killed by death squads in Guatemala. Rodrigo Baggio retrieves discarded computers from New York, London, and Toronto and installs them in the favelas of Brazil, where he and his staff teach computer skills to poor children. Biologist Janine Benyus speaks to twelve hundred executives at a business forum in Queensland about biologically inspired industrial development. Paul Sykes, a volunteer for the National Audubon Society, completes his fifty-second Christmas Bird Count in Little Creek, Virginia, joining fifty thousand other people who tally 70 million birds on one day. Sumita Dasgupta leads students, engineers, journalists, farmers, and Adivasis (tribal people) on a ten-day

trek through Gujarat exploring the rebirth of ancient rainwater harvesting and catchment systems that bring life back to drought-prone areas of India. Silas Kpanan' Ayong Siakor, who exposed links between the genocidal policies of former president Charles Taylor and illegal logging in Liberia, now creates certified, sustainable timber policies.

These eight, who may never meet and know one another, are part of a coalescence comprising hundreds of thousands of organizations with no center, codified beliefs, or charismatic leader. The movement grows and spreads in every city and country. Virtually every tribe, culture, language, and religion is part of it, from Mongolians to Uzbeks to Tamils. It is comprised of families in India, students in Australia, farmers in France, the landless in Brazil, the bananeras of Honduras, the "poors" of Durban, villagers in Irian Jaya, indigenous tribes of Bolivia, and housewives in Japan. Its leaders are farmers, zoologists, shoemakers, and poets.

The movement can't be divided because it is atomized—small pieces loosely joined. It forms, gathers, and dissipates quickly. Many inside and out dismiss it as powerless, but it has been known to bring down governments, companies, and leaders through



J. Hildebrand

*The Raging Grannies lend their charm and pointed lyrics to citizen gatherings across the country, adding their voices to what Hawken calls the “largest social movement in all of history.”*

witnessing, informing, and massing.

The movement has three basic roots: the environmental and social justice movements, and indigenous cultures’ resistance to globalization—all of which are intertwining. It arises spontaneously from different economic sectors, cultures, regions, and cohorts, resulting in a global, classless, diverse, and embedded movement, spreading worldwide without exception. In a world grown too complex for constrictive ideologies, the very word movement may be too small, for it is the largest coming together of citizens in history.

There are research institutes, community development agencies, village- and citizen-based organizations, corporations, networks, faith-based groups, trusts, and foundations. They defend against corrupt politics and climate change, corporate predation and the death of the oceans, governmental indifference and pandemic poverty, industrial forestry and farming, depletion of soil and water.

Describing the breadth of the movement is like trying to hold the ocean in your hand. It is that large. When a part rises above the waterline, the iceberg beneath usually remains unseen. When Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize, the wire service stories didn’t mention the network

of six thousand different women’s groups in Africa planting trees. When we hear about a chemical spill in a river, it is never mentioned that more than four thousand organizations in North America have adopted a river, creek, or stream. We read that organic agriculture is the fastest-growing sector of farming in America, Japan, Mexico, and Europe, but no connection is made to the more than three thousand organizations that educate farmers, customers, and legislators about sustainable agriculture.

This is the first time in history that a large social movement is not bound together by an “ism.” What binds it together is ideas, not ideologies. This unnamed movement’s big contribution is the absence of one big idea; in its stead it offers thousands of practical and useful ideas. In place of isms are processes, concerns, and compassion. The movement demonstrates a pliable, resonant, and generous side of humanity.

And it is impossible to pin down. Generalities are largely inaccurate. It is nonviolent, and grassroots; it has no bombs, armies, or helicopters. A charismatic male vertebrate is not in charge. The movement does not agree on everything nor will it ever, because that would be an ideology. But it shares a basic set of fundamental

understandings about the Earth, how it functions, and the necessity of fairness and equity for all people partaking of the planet’s life-giving systems.

The promise of this unnamed movement is to offer solutions to what appear to be insoluble dilemmas: poverty, global climate change, terrorism, ecological degradation, polarization of income, loss of culture. It is not burdened with a syndrome of trying to save the world; it is trying to remake the world.

There is fierceness here. There is no other explanation for the raw courage and heart seen over and again in the people who march, speak, create, resist, and build. It is the fierceness of what it means to know we are human and want to survive.

This movement is relentless and unafraid. It cannot be mollified, pacified, or suppressed. There can be no Berlin Wall moment, no treaty-signing, no morning to awaken when the superpowers agree to stand down. The movement will continue to take myriad forms. It will not rest. There will be no Marx, Alexander, or Kennedy. No book can explain it, no person can represent it, no words can encompass it, because the movement is the breathing, sentient testament of the living world.

And I believe it will prevail. I don’t mean defeat, conquer, or cause harm to someone else. And I don’t tender the claim in an oracular sense. I mean the thinking that informs the movement’s goal—to create a just society conducive to life on Earth—will reign. It will soon suffuse and permeate most institutions. But before then, it will change a sufficient number of people so as to begin the reversal of centuries of frenzied self-destruction.

Inspiration is not garnered from litanies of what is flawed; it resides in humanity’s willingness to restore, redress, reform, recover, reimagine, and reconsider. Healing the wounds of the Earth and its people does not require saintliness or a political party. It is not a liberal or conservative activity. It is a sacred act.

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## The Selling of Frank Slide

### Dear Editor:

Recently, while driving along the southeastern margin of the Frank Slide, I noticed that a portion of the internationally known historic site was for sale. A calloused and unflinching society might view this sale as an opportunity for new landowners to dig for Frank Slide artifacts and victims. “Hey Jake, look at all them smashed skeletons in that hole you just dug.”

As incongruous as a For Sale sign on the Frank Slide might seem, it reminded me that it was only a few years ago, during the hundredth anniversary of the Frank Slide, when society, in the name of progress, dug up more than 500 metres of this same historic landmark in order to install a water line that could have gone elsewhere.

That action sparked letters of outrage that were sent to Alberta newspapers from as far away as the southern United States. The 2003 water line excavation through the Frank Slide, in violation of the province’s own laws (backed by an imposing fine), was apparently sanctioned by the province’s government department. The result: seasonal staff members who worked at the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre were left to administer damage control to a shocked clientele numbering tens of thousands.

Many of this province’s most compelling vistas and no small number of its parks and historic sites are under siege from adjacent development. Not too many years ago the Okotoks Rock (the largest known glacial erratic in the world) commanded instant roadside attention. Today, it’s nearly lost amid surrounding houses, barns, and other outbuildings. The province-wide problem: the land base protecting most heritage landscape vistas is too small to offer visual protection from an encroaching, ever-expanding society.

Thankfully, the Frank Slide has achieved formal designation. Unfortunately, this designation does not include all the lands that are part of



D. McIntyre

*Morning dawns slowly on the haunting eastern face of southwestern Alberta’s Turtle Mountain and the distant Flathead Range. Hidden within the twilight shadows of this same mountain, encroaching development now threatens the footprint and integrity of a national monument – the 1903 Frank Slide. Here in the Crownsnest River valley, and elsewhere in Alberta, society has failed to create adequate reserves of public land that protect, over time, treasured heritage landscapes and vistas.*

the slide’s historic footprint. Even more disturbing, however, is the observation that the designated lands can be torn up and compromised (even if people killed during the 1903 Frank Slide are buried there).

Last year I reported via a letter to the editor that Fortis Alberta had degraded and littered land on the eastern margin of the Frank Slide. The government’s response: a colossal and protracted silence that still lingers over the land. The desecrated land remains a mess, new dirt bike and quad roads course through it, and discarded metal bailing bands left by Fortis Alberta litter the landscape.

My point: the government of Alberta needs to get real. It needs to protect what it says it will protect. It needs functional vertebrae (an honest backbone), functional eyes, and a functional mind. It also needs to demonstrate that it can actually stand up and show its teeth. And once it’s on its feet, exhibiting signs of erect posture, this same government needs to act with logic and reason on its side. It needs to step in to acquire those essential, quintessential parcels of

land – such as the *complete* Frank Slide – that enable society to retain vital, intact links with its cultural and natural landscapes. To do less is to squander Alberta’s priceless heritage and pour management money down the drain.

— **David McIntyre,**  
Crownsnest Pass

## Rush to Extract Tar Sands Ignores Public Good

### Dear Editor:

I attended both rounds of the Oil Sands Multi-stakeholder Committee public hearings in Edmonton, presenting at the first round and submitting a contribution to the second. I’ve also been to Fort McMurray and flown over the tar sands developments, the huge tailings ponds, and the remarkable McClelland Lake Wetland Complex, which is threatened with destruction if the Petro-Canada Fort Hills project goes ahead as approved. I’ve spoken with elders from Fort McKay and others in the area who are alarmed about current and planned development. With the CNRL plant located just northwest of McKay, Syncrude and Suncor located to the south, and the approved Petro-Canada Fort Hills project planned location just northeast of McKay, the people of McKay will be surrounded by toxic odours no matter which way the wind blows! No one should have to live with that!

There are 50 km<sup>2</sup> of toxic mine tailings ponds in the Fort McMurray area, and the industry still doesn’t have a convincing means of dealing with this ecological disaster waiting to happen. None of the huge affected area has been certified reclaimed. It is acknowledged that some of these tailings ponds are leaking into the Athabasca River and that there are significant levels of fish deformities and abnormalities, likely caused by pollution from the tar sands. Dr. John O’Connor’s concerns about high rates of unusual cancers downstream in the Fort Chip area

were brushed aside by an incomplete epidemiological study. Concerns about high levels of arsenic in moose meat downstream and downwind of the tar sands are also being conveniently ignored.

Meanwhile, it is the average water flow of the Athabasca River that is being used to determine how much water can safely be diverted for current and future tar sands production. It currently takes three to five barrels of water to extract one barrel of bitumen. The amount of water to be used for current and proposed plants is in the trillions of barrels. What will happen during low water flows? Is the industry going to shut down during that time? I doubt it. The Cumulative Effects Management Association has not yet determined or set the full range of ecological limits of production. It is the height of irresponsible development that tar sands expansions are being approved in the face of these and other problems.

The Stelmach government is responsible for setting the rate of expansion of the tar sands, whether



*Tailings ponds north of Fort McMurray*

they care to acknowledge this or not. They fund (or don't fund) scientific and baseline studies to determine what the environmental effects are of current and proposed tar sands extraction, they appoint the AEUB officials who (always) approve proposed plants, they set the legislation that allows companies to purchase tar sands leases without public scrutiny, they set a royalty regime that effectively shields tar sands developers from inflation caused by overexpansion of the economy, etc. etc. The "market" is by no means the sole determiner.

I am concerned that the Stelmach Conservatives have bent over

backwards to approve further expansion of the tar sands in the face of a growing body of evidence of serious problems that will only worsen without significant changes. What is the big hurry? Where else is the oil industry going to go? Most other thinking governments in the world have nationalized their oil and gas industry. Where else in the world is the oil industry provided with an effective incentive to increase production costs where the higher their production costs, the longer it will take before full royalty rates are charged? Perhaps the oil industry would prefer to move their operations to Venezuela, like the Chinese National Oil Company has recently chosen to do. Effective governments must increase their ability to intervene in the economy when the environment and public good are not being protected.

— **Rod Olstad**  
Edmonton

*This letter was first published in the Edmonton Journal on August 2, 2007.*

## STATEMENT OF CONCERN – EASTERN IRRIGATION DISTRICT APPLICATION

Eastern Irrigation District (EID) proposal to amend licences 1903-09-04-002 and 1998-07-13-002

AWA learned in September that the Eastern Irrigation District is proposing to amend two of its licences. The notice states: *"The applicant has applied to amend two licences with priority numbers 1903-09-04-002 and 1998-07-13-002, to allow the District to provide water for additional purposes. The additional purposes are municipal, agricultural, commercial, industrial, management of fish, management of wildlife, habitat enhancement, and recreation."*

The amendment relates to two EID licences which, read together, would affect 762,000 acre feet diverted at the Bassano Dam in Bassano, Alberta. The purpose of the current licences is for "irrigation and agriculture (stock-watering)

purposes." The proposed new uses will be for "municipal, agricultural, commercial, industrial, management of fish, management of wildlife, habitat enhancement, and recreation." The amendment would allow the EID to allocate the unused portion of its licence and empowers the EID to decide who gets the water in a river system that is already over-allocated.

While AWA is not opposed to some of the proposed uses (fish and wildlife management), we are totally opposed to this amendment. The purposes for the water and its allocation should be subject to the constraints of the Alberta Water Act and dealt with through basin plans and the market mechanisms for license transfers that are available in the Water Act. Within the Water Act, if a transfer was contemplated, Alberta could reclaim back up to 10% of the licence to use for

instream flow needs. Allowing the EID to sell water is not in the best interest of Albertans.

We believe Alberta has already delegated too much control over our precious natural resources, including water, to unaccountable local authorities and irrigation districts. This would be another poor decision if it were to be approved, allowing water allocation decisions without public input or government direction.

AWA is requesting that the amendment proposal be rejected outright and that the EID be directed to deal with their needs in the basin planning process.

*The application for the amendment can be viewed at:* <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/Regions/Bow/Notices/files/5341.html>

# EVENTS

## TUESDAY TALKS

Pre-registration is advised for all talks.

Location: AWA

455 - 12 St. NW, Calgary

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

Cost: \$5 per adult, \$1 for children

Contact: (403) 283-2025

1-866-313-0713



Tuesday, October 16, 2007

### **A Line in the Disappearing Sand: Tiger Beetles of the Middle Sand Hills**

*With Randy Dzenkiw*

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

### **Beautiful Bighorn: Can We Afford To Leave It Unprotected?**

*With Vivian Pharis*

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

### **Disappearing Dunes on the Prairies**

*With Dr. Darren Bender*

Tuesday, December 4, 2007

### **Fabulous Wild Alberta: Worth Saving!**

*With Robin and Marian White*

## WINTER HIKES

Saturday February 23, 2008

### **Sheep River Valley: A Guided Winter Hike**

*With Nigel Douglas*

Cost: \$20 per person (AWA members)

\$25 per person (non-members)

Contact: (403) 283-2025

Register on-line: <http://shop.albertawilderness.ca/>

## ALBERTA'S WILDS NEED YOU!

Want to learn more about the wild lands, waters, and life that make up our beautiful and diverse home while sharing your passion for wild spaces?

Alberta Wilderness Association is currently seeking nature-loving volunteers in communities across the province to help with our display team.

Get involved in your community talking to people about the environmental issues affecting them and about AWA's role in keeping Alberta *Wild*.

For more information contact:

Alberta Wilderness Association

(403) 283-2025 • 1-866-313-0713

[albertawilderness.ca/AWA/Displays.htm](http://albertawilderness.ca/AWA/Displays.htm)



Friday, October 12, 2007

### **Talking To People: The Art and Science of Making Your Presentations Effective, Memorable and Enjoyable**

*With Lorne Fitch, P. Biol*

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

AWA, 455 - 12 St. NW, Calgary

Cost: \$10. A light lunch will be provided.

This one-day workshop is designed for individuals already engaged in extension, awareness, or education activities, and those who wish to communicate more effectively in presentation venues. Participants will leave the workshop with a greater skill set to develop and deliver presentations. The workshop is interactive and builds on the collective experience of the audience and the instructor. Space is limited to 20 individuals.



Saturday, October 27, 2007

### **Wind Energy Forum**

8:45 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. University of Calgary, Science Theatre 141

No registration, admission free (Lunch not provided)



With "peak oil" and "climate change" now household words, people are looking to wind energy as the solution to our fossil fuel woes. But wind energy isn't the panacea that many think it is.

The University of Calgary, Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Alberta Wilderness Association and Grasslands Naturalists will host this forum, which will look at this burgeoning industry and expose some of the myths about wind energy. Expert presenters will include David Keith, Robert Barclay, Brad Stelfox, and Cheryl Bradley. They will address technical, economic, and environmental aspects, as well as a vision for the future.



*AWA thanks our guests, volunteers, and donors for a wonderful evening*



*MLA David Swann harmonized with entertainer Paul Finkleman in an impromptu song.*



*The outstanding musicians of the Foothills Brass quintet thrilled guests at AWA's 19th annual Wild West Gala.*



*The bounty of the earth was celebrated throughout the evening.*



*AWA Board members welcomed a full house to the 2007 Wild West Gala.*



*Members, supporters, industry, government, colleagues, and friends enjoyed a lively, superb evening.*



*MLA Alana DeLong joins members and guests in a toast to AWA and Wild Alberta: "The Alberta Wilderness Association is a remarkable organization with a noble history with a timeless cause. It is relevant, loyal to its values, tough, talented, and true."*



C. Townsend

C. Townsend

C. Townsend

D. Olson

C. Townsend

D. Olson

# WILD ALBERTA – A YEAR IN REVIEW

*Every fall, Alberta Wilderness Association pauses to take a deep breath,  
to reflect on the past year and reconnect with each other.*



- We celebrate the enduring commitment of one or more wilderness champions in Alberta with the Wilderness Defenders Awards.
- We challenge ourselves with new ideas in our Annual Lecture.
- We hold our Annual General Meeting and review the past year.

*We invite you to join us this year for the*

## AWARDS PRESENTATION AND ANNUAL LECTURE

Friday, November 16, 2007

### ALBERTA WILDERNESS DEFENDERS AWARDS

In recognition of their outstanding conservation achievements, AWA is pleased to present the 2007 Wilderness Defenders Awards to Cheryl Bradley and Ian Urquhart. Their love of Alberta's wild lands and their persistence in defending them have inspired countless Albertans to take an active role in conservation.

### "SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY: IS SAFE SEX POSSIBLE?"

Dr. Ian Urquhart, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta, will explore whether environmental NGOs who partner with corporations to secure financial resources mortally wound the authenticity of their policy critiques.

Location: 455 – 12 St. NW, Calgary

Wine & Cheese Reception: 6:00 p.m. • Lecture and Awards: 7:00 p.m. • Cost: \$25

Reservations: (403) 283-2025 or 1-866-313-0713 • Online: [www.albertawilderness.ca](http://www.albertawilderness.ca)

## AWA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, November 17, 2007

Time: 10:30 a.m. • Location: 455 – 12 St. NW, Calgary

Registration: (403) 283-2025 or 1-866-313-0713

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:



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