



Press Release for Immediate Release

April 28, 2008

Alberta Conservation Groups Ask Government for Reduction in Size of West Fraser Logging Area

The Hinton Wood Products (HWP) forest management agreement in west central Alberta ends June 14, 2008. Conservation groups are asking Ted Morton Minister of Sustainable Resource Development that upon renewal the HWP Forest Management Area be reduced in size by at least 20%.

“The main reason for requesting this change is that HWP has closed their wood room and one of their pulp machines, and this will result in them requiring about 1/6 less of their original annual allowable cut,” says Connie Simons with the Athabasca Bioregional Society in Hinton. “This creates an ideal opportunity to now set aside land in the area for protection, without affecting the forestry companies in the area economically.”

“Reducing the size of the HWP management area would create some of the flexibility in wood supply for the forest industry in the west central Foothills region and enable the protection of an area of the Foothills that has the most conservation value for caribou and other species,” says Helene Walsh with CPAWS Northern Alberta. “This protected area can then contribute to recreation, tourism and biodiversity conservation and the ecological and economic values of those things to the local communities and the province.”

“The establishment of a protected area in the west central Foothills would be consistent with the recommendations of the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy and help meet Alberta’s commitment to sustainable forest management and the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy. Protected Foothill’s caribou habitat would help Alberta meet the requirements for species at risk in Alberta. It would assist the forest industry in the region to attain Forest Stewardship Council certification for their management areas to gain access to a preferential market for their products in a time of hardship,” says Cliff Wallis with the Alberta Wilderness Association.

“Alberta is now the focus of international attention on how our resources are being managed,” says Glen Semenchuk with the Federation of Alberta Naturalists. “Currently the Foothills has only 1.2 % protected areas. Adding to this would indicate to the world that Alberta is a progressive province that values its commitments, its biodiversity, and can be a place of choice for customers who care about sourcing their products from sustainably managed forests like Victoria Secret who recently stopped sourcing fibre for their catalogues from West Fraser Hinton because of concerns for caribou and other wildlife. But they have said if things improve they would come back as customers.”

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