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Pipeline Development in Rumsey Natural Area Another Betrayal of Trust

Despite previous assurances, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) and Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC) learned only after the fact that a pipeline had been constructed by Paramount Resources Ltd. in the Rumsey Natural Area.

“This is another betrayal of trust in a long history of failures to recognize a legitimate long-standing interest by conservation organizations in protecting this internationally significant protected area,” says Cliff Wallis, Vice-President of the Alberta Wilderness Association. “Without a management plan in place that adequately protects the Rumsey Natural Area (NA), we are compelled to play a watchdog role over this important remnant of our natural heritage.”

The internationally significant Rumsey Natural Area is in Alberta’s Parkland Natural Region, less than 1% of which is protected. “It is an outrage that there is no protection against industrial development in this supposedly protected area,” says Wallis.

Mineral rights continue to be sold by Alberta Energy in the Rumsey Natural Area over objections of conservation interests. Last spring, AWA and ANPC representatives learned of a plan by Paramount Resources Ltd. to construct a two-kilometer pipeline through this area of rolling hummocky moraine with rare plains rough fescue grasslands and numerous wetlands.

“We understood, from a meeting with representatives of the company and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, that there would be an environmental assessment of the project and that we would have an opportunity to review and comment on it before a decision was made about proceeding,” says Cheryl Bradley, Southern Director for the Alberta Native Plant Council. “Instead, our requests for information were rebuffed until after the project was completed.”

“Energy Resources Conservation Board information letter IL90-21 requires ERCB advise AWA upon receipt of any applications for well licenses in the Rumsey Natural Area,” states Cliff Wallis. “Paramount and government regulators have gone against the spirit of the by not notifying us about pipeline applications.”

“We are now requesting and reviewing any environmental information used by government in its approval of the project, to determine if professional standards are being met,” says Bradley. “Plains rough fescue grasslands in the Rumsey NA are extremely rare and at risk and we do not know how to restore them once they are disturbed. “We are curious to see the rationale for approving this project which compromises the ecological integrity of the protected area.”

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