



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

The Honourable Peter Kent,
Minister of the Environment
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3
Email: Minister@ec.gc.ca

August 23, 2011

Dear Minister Kent,

I am writing on behalf of Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) to express our disappointment that an adult male mountain goat was killed last month in Jasper National Park. Though unintentional, the mountain goat was a casualty of research being conducted to inform the Marmot Basin Ski Area expansion project.

AWA supports long term research projects that will ultimately benefit the species or ecosystem itself, seek to develop scientific thought, inform decision-makers, and educate the public. We do not support the current research taking place within Jasper National Park, which is being conducted to inform expanded commercial development of Marmot Basin Ski Area. Though the three-year study will investigate whether mountain goat populations in this area will be negatively affected by proposed expansions, the Terms of Reference seem to indicate Parks Canada is looking for a list of mitigations and management protocols that would allow the development to move forward.

The wilderness area in question is known mountain goat habitat. The Terms of Reference of the study state: "Mountain Goats use the slopes of Marmot Mountain in summer and its wind-swept ridges and passes in winter." Mountain goats are particularly sensitive to human disturbance, and do not easily habituate to human activities. In a 1986 Parks Canada paper, Dr. Bruce Leeson stated that "goats are particularly vulnerable because of traditional dedication to their small, isolated winter ranges and establishment of new habitats is almost impossible for them." One of the conclusions made based on results obtained from a 20 year study of the Caw Ridge mountain goat herd was that helicopters are very disturbing to mountain goats, and should not fly within 2 kilometers of goat habitat. Despite the fact a goat was inadvertently killed as a result of this study, the presence of helicopters in goat habitat has likely increased stress levels among the study population.

The Parks Canada website states that: "Parks Canada requires applied and basic research and monitoring activities to make responsible decisions in its management, planning and operating practices, as well as to broaden scientific understanding. Research activities are encouraged and managed to ensure that commemorative and ecological integrity are maintained". The study in question simply does not serve these purposes.



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Significant Parks Canada resources in various forms have been invested in this study. Canadian taxpayers should not be footing the bill of studies seeking to assist commercial development within a National Park. AWA believes that Parks Canada needs to reassure Canadians that protection of ecological integrity is still the priority in Jasper National Park. It is not Parks Canada's role to compromise this integrity in an attempt to boost the economic viability of companies operating within the National Park.

We hope that you consider our concerns, and ask that the Marmot Basin Ski Area expansion, along with the research activities associated with the proposal, are closely reconsidered.

Thank you for your time, we look forward to your prompt response to this issue.

Sincerely,
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

Madeline Wilson
Conservation Specialist

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