



Dear {FIRST_NAME|Wilderness Defender},

With a new premier, and a slate of new ministers in Alberta, there is a feeling of change and some optimism that progress can finally be made on better protection for Alberta's wildlands and wildlife. A couple of examples – protection for the Castle, and the notorious proposed "Potatogate" public land sale – will be an early test of Premier Redford's renewed commitment to "transparency and accountability."

- Nigel Douglas, AWA Conservation Specialist

In This Issue:

Protect the Castle wildland
Stop the Notorious
"Potatogate" Land Sale

AWA

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Protect the Castle Wildland

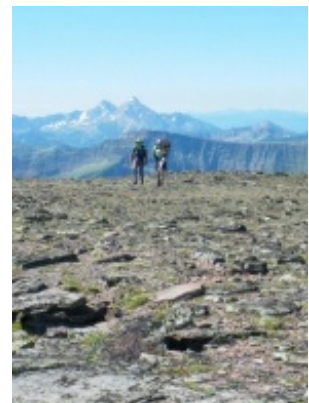
AWA and other environmental groups have been working for decades towards better protection of southern Alberta's Castle region, north of Waterton National Park. A yawning gap in Alberta's protected areas network, the Castle Wilderness contains one of the highest animal and plant species diversities in Alberta, but is under continuing threat from inappropriate industrial activity and barely-regulated motorized access.

The only way to protect the special values of the Castle is as a legally designated protected area. And Albertans are clearly in favour of better protection in the Castle:

A 2011 survey conducted in Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod, and Crowsnest Pass found that "A clear and substantial majority of residents who expressed an opinion (86.9%) support the provincial government declaring the Castle a wildland park" (Lethbridge Citizen Society Research Lab, March 2011).

Similarly, a survey in Lethbridge and Coaldale found "The majority (74%) reported that they either 'strongly support' or 'somewhat support' declaring the Castle Special Management Area as a Wildland Park" (Praxis, April 2011).

The biggest immediate threat to the Castle is plans for an imminent clearcut logging program in the region. The Castle area is a 500-kilometre round trip from the mill in Cochrane, and it makes little sense to clear cut poor quality "matchstick" trees in the Castle. The ecological values of the forests in this region – for production of clean water, as well as wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities – are far more important than their marginal timber value. And once again, Albertans are clearly opposed to this logging program.



The same polls above, carried out in 2011 in the communities of Lethbridge and Coaldale, and Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod, and Crowsnest Pass, found that 79.5% and 77% of people respectively would support no commercial logging (surveys conducted by Lethbridge Citizen Society Research Lab and Praxis survey respectively).

The time is long overdue to protect the Castle! Please consider writing to Premier Redford:

The Hon. Alison Redford
Premier of Alberta
Room 307, Legislature Building
10800 – 97th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Email: Premier@gov.ab.ca

Stop the Notorious "Potatogate" Land Sale

Regular Wilderness & Wildlife Defenders will remember how, in November 2010, "Potatogate", the shady Alberta government deal to sell off 16,000 acres of public land – scarce native grassland and endangered species habitat – was withdrawn, following an unprecedented public outcry.

Unfortunately it was too good to last! In August 2011, the Potatogate land sale was put back on the table. Once again the public opposition has been loud and clear. And this time around, the scheme's opponents included then-PC leadership candidate, Alison Redford.

In a September 29 email, Redford's campaign advisor Jeff Henwood wrote: "As Premier, Alison will... Suspend the sale of 16,000 acres of ecologically sensitive crown land near Bow Island and wait for the South Saskatchewan Basin Regional Advisory Council to present its final report on the best use of that parcel."

So it is time to ensure that new Premier Redford sticks to her campaign promise to suspend the land sale.

[Click here](#) to see AWA's letter to Premier Redford.

The Hon. Alison Redford
Premier of Alberta
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Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action

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