



Release Date: December 9, 2011

Time to protect Alberta's Castle and Bighorn on International Mountain Day

On the occasion of International Mountain Day, December 11, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) calls on the Government of Alberta to secure important water sources and grizzly habitat by protecting the Castle and Bighorn areas of Alberta for future generations.

"Protecting the Castle from clearcut logging, multiple roads and seismic lines, and intense motorized vehicle abuse will safeguard important Oldman river headwaters for southern Alberta communities," says Nigel Douglas, conservation specialist with Alberta Wilderness Association. "Protecting the Bighorn will do the same for central Alberta communities. We must act now to protect the important water security and wildlife values they provide."

According to the United Nations, "International Mountain Day is an opportunity to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build partnerships that will bring positive change to the world's mountains and highlands."

The Rocky Mountains of Alberta are extremely important as the source of most river water for the millions of people who live in the prairies of Canada. Intact, natural headwaters regions accumulate, filter and slowly release water; they protect against floods and drought. They are also critical habitat for threatened wildlife populations that Albertans value greatly, including the grizzly bear and native trout fisheries.

Already, climate change effects such as diminished snowpack, receding glaciers and vegetation changes are exerting pressure on habitat and water sources of Alberta's mountains. Grizzly bears travel far beyond existing park boundaries; their most important mortality cause is motorized vehicle access into grizzly bear habitat. Important sources of water outside mountain parks are being degraded by cumulative effects of industrial forestry, energy exploration and intensive off-highway vehicle access.

"What better way could there be for the Alberta Government to celebrate International Mountain Day than by protecting the valuable Castle and Bighorn wildlife habitat and water sources with strong conservation measures?" asks AWA conservation specialist Carolyn Campbell.

For more information:

Nigel Douglas, Alberta Wilderness Association conservation specialist, (403) 283-2025
Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association conservation specialist, (403) 921-9519

