



**ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION**

*"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"*

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November 7, 2012

**RE: Imminent Logging Plans for Hidden Creek, Upper Oldman River Basin**

Dear Premier Redford and Minister McQueen:

AWA has only recently become aware of imminent logging and new road building in Hidden Creek, apparently to begin on November 19, 2012. AWA has long held an interest in this area and throughout the years, most notably 1984 taken a very strong and public stand in opposition to logging of this region.

We have on record correspondence that demonstrates the intense opposition to logging this area, and I have pasted segments of key letters in the following pages.

We are writing today to ask you to **suspend logging and road construction for Hidden Creek** pending a fuller environment impact assessment that properly addresses risk to Hidden Creek it's numerous values, including watershed, recreational and wildlife, in particular native fish populations.

It is hard to comprehend when we look at past correspondence that the message in both eras is we need to wait for a planning process. In 1984 it was Integrated Resource Planning; in 2012 it is the SSRP. It is regrettable and I am sure **something we need to fix** when our current consultation system does not provide a specific opportunity or requirement for our government forest service staff to consult on conservation concerns when planning logging for an area. As we understand consultation with grazing

lease holders is required, it seems time that consultation with conservation colleagues is needed and is overdue.



TO  
ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF ALBERTA

March 19, 1984

Hon. J. Zaozirny  
Minister of Energy  
and Natural Resources  
407 Legislature Building  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5K 2B6

Dear Mr. Zaozirny:

Re: Logging in the Hidden Creek Basin

The Public Advisory Committee on the Environment, through two of its Study Groups (Renewable Resources and Environment Protection) have examined the issue of logging in the Hidden Creek area of the Upper Oldman River Basin. After several meetings and numerous discussions the two Study Groups have asked me to express once more, their concerns over the proposed activities in the above basin.

This persistent concern arises from the conviction that an Integrated Management Plan should be in place before further road construction and logging is permitted in an area where such intense conflict has developed over its proper use. It is our understanding that such a plan at present has not been fully developed and is not expected to be completed before December 1984. An Integrated Management Plan, to truly serve the people of Alberta, needs to be developed without constraints. Consequently, the Public Advisory Committee believes that it would be difficult to develop a really satisfactory plan while road construction and logging are already in progress. We therefore strongly advise that you place an immediate moratorium on further road development and logging in the Hidden Creek Basin until the Livingstone Porcupine Integrated Management Plan has been fully developed and subjected to public comment.

In more recent years we have learned that **Hidden Creek is a key and critical spawning stream for bull trout and is one of a few streams remaining with pure strain, native westslope cutthroat trout.** We know, based on information collected by the ACA and Fish and Wildlife staff Hidden Creek is crucial for the majority of bull trout spawning for the entire upper Oldman watershed. Based on recent status reports for bull trout this species continues to decline throughout all of its range in Alberta despite a

zero harvest regulation that has been in place for 16 years. **This suggests that land use has, and is having, a negative impact on bull trout recovery efforts. Streams like Hidden Creek should have the maximum protection afforded to them if we are to see any recovery of the population of our provincial fish species.**

Hidden Creek was to have been reclassified as a Class "A" stream, providing it (and native fish populations) maximum protection. We understood that any prospect of logging had been shelved pending this reclassification of the stream. **Now we understand that the ESR department has reversed this position** and provided approval to Spray Lakes Sawmills to construct 5 km of new road and log several cutblocks adjacent to the stream.

We have also been made aware that new road construction and logging will occur on very steep slopes and the road will cross several intermittent and one permanent tributary to Hidden Creek in violation of the Class "A" protection requirements. Additionally we are concerned that in the rush to log, slope stability and ground water have not been fully and competently assessed as to the risk to Hidden Creek, both from a hydrologic and a water quality (i.e. sediment) standpoint. The importance of the native fish populations of Hidden Creek should be paramount for any land use planning and if there is risk to these populations, protection of aquatic biodiversity should be the priority.

It seems the permanent closure of the existing seismic trail that parallels Hidden Creek has not been given any weight in the new logging scheme. This trail was closed by the Forest Service in the 1980's based on concerns from the AWA. It would seem the job was unsatisfactory as OHV traffic, probably aided by earlier logging roads constructed by the timber industry, has reopened the trail. This trail needs to be closed and restored, again because of the prominence and priority of native fish populations in Hidden Creek.

Excerpts from Letter written by J .A. Brennan, Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Alberta Forest Service January 5, 1984.

“The main concern of the Fish and Wildlife Division is that the area is a major summering and breeding area for an estimated 400-500 elk. They have requested that the present seismic trail, the only current access into the valley, be recontoured and put to bed before any logging program is undertaken. This would serve to reduce the impact on elk and other ungulates caused by increased access due to timber harvesting. **This seismic line and the poorly constructed crossings are causing siltation problems to the fishery in the creek...**

The seismic line problem should be reclaimed and Reforestation and Reclamation Branch has committed funds to be spent in 1984 to get this work done.”

It is the A.W.A.'s belief that Hidden Creek is the last unlogged watershed in Southern Alberta and that very few Albertans know of the plan to log. Because they have an interest in seeing that no logging takes place they have requested a more thorough investigation of the site before ... is allowed to start road construction. The A.W.A. feels that more public involvement is necessary before

the plans can be approved. When the A.F.S. refused this request the A.W.A. decided to bring , their concerns to the public, and on September 29 sent telegrams to the Premier, the Honourable John Zaozirny and other members of the cabinet.”

We firmly believe the situation in 1984 and the one today in 2012 has arisen because of an imperfect public consultation process and an unwillingness of our Forest Service to be proactive in engaging with the conservation community.

We are asking you to give this letter and request urgent consideration and that you suspend logging and road construction for Hidden Creek pending a fuller environment impact assessment that properly addresses risk to Hidden Creek and native fish populations.

Yours truly,  
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Christyann Olson  
Executive Director

cc:

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