



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

Honourable Kyle Fawcett
Minister of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
323 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Ave. NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

By email: ESRD.Minister@gov.ab.ca

September 29, 2014

Dear Minister Fawcett,

Re: OHV events in the Livingstone-Porcupine Area/C-5 Forest Reserve

Congratulations on your recent appointment as a minister and welcome to the Ministry of Environment Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD). Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) looks forward to an opportunity to meet with you soon. Founded in 1965, AWA is a province-wide conservation organization with over 7,000 members and supporters in Alberta and around the world. AWA works throughout the province to promote awareness and protection of Alberta's wild lands, wildlife and wild waters.

AWA is writing to you to express our serious concern regarding the environmental damage that is being done during off highway vehicle (OHV) events being held on public land. Through the past few years, there has been a substantial increase in the number, intensity, and frequency of OHV organized commercial events and races. In particular we have been alerted to the cumulative effects and concerns with these events in the Livingstone-Porcupine area south of Kananaskis Country.

The events include motorcycle, snowmobile, quad and 4X4 competitions, scheduled races, endurance competitions and more. We have been contacted by concerned members through the years and, following events this summer, we have been contacted again as people wonder who is accountable for these recreational motorists and what enforcement is in place to prevent destruction of the landscape.

These events are held on public lands that belong to all Albertans for their enjoyment and recreation but all activity on public land must first ensure the biological integrity of the area for fish and wildlife and our headwaters security is not compromised.

We have observed, documented, and publicized our concerns regarding OHV activity along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains for many years. Concerns from every municipality and many Albertans appear to be ignored and there seems to be little regulation despite an increasingly negative impact on public land.

A decade ago, AWA wrote the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) asking for a ban on motorized vehicle racing on public land (a copy of the letter is provided for your reference). SRD took action by sending a letter of warning to a specific motocross event organizer at the time. Regrettably the races and events have continued through the years and the cumulative effects of OHV events year after year are having devastating consequences on important watersheds and wilderness areas.

We know the numbers, the intensity, the frequency, the trend and the impacts of these events must be a concern to you and your department staff. As the Minister of ESRD we look forward to your leadership and to learning about your plan to deal with the issues related to these commercialized and exploitive events. The following photo is from the 2003 motocross race; there are many pictures from the 2014 motocross race that look similar if not worse in terms of the damage done and it is our understanding those photos can be made available.



AWA is seeking answers to the following questions and would appreciate your timely and detailed response.

1. **Rules, Regulations, and Monitoring:** AWA believes OHV activity needs to be regulated to minimize environmental disturbance and protect environmental values while allowing reasonable opportunities for recreation. Monitoring programs to document use patterns and potential environmental damage are necessary.
 - How many of these “events” are held annually in the Livingstone-Porcupine Area (see map below for reference),
 - What trend has your ministry documented over the last decade regarding the number of these events?
 - Are there windows of time when no events are permitted?
 - Are the number of participants in these events controlled and monitored? Who monitors the effects of these races on water quality, wildlife, fisheries and erosion and sedimentation rates? Where can we review the results of the monitoring?

- Does the applicant obtain a permit under the Water Act for in-stream activity? If so were permits given for events this year? Where can we review these permits?
2. **Trail Networks:** AWA believes motorized recreation must be permitted only on roads, trails, and routes expressly designated and/or constructed for their use. Designated routes (and closures) must be clearly defined, signed and publicized; regular maintenance of all trails is required.
 - How are the routes for these events determined?
 - Are existing trails used, or are new trails made to accommodate these events?
 - What is the frequency of stream crossings as part of these events over the year?
 - Are appropriate approvals given by DFO for these events?
 - Are the routes inspected by ESRD staff prior to approvals for use?
 - What protocols do staff use to assess routes?
 - Who monitors the cumulative impacts and determines enough is enough?

 3. **Wildlife Impacts:** We know that as vegetation is destroyed, fewer food sources and nesting areas are available for wildlife. Stress caused by OHV noise and disturbance can lead to a weakened physical condition or death, the abandonment of territories, and lower reproduction rates. Roads and trails can cause direct and indirect wildlife mortality, and may lead to the fragmentation, reduction and extirpation of local wildlife populations (particularly through the genetic isolation of small groups of individuals). OHV's can increase sedimentation into streams reducing water quality and can physically damage spawning beds for fish and disrupt their aquatic habitat.
 - What is done to protect the streams crossed that contain "threatened" bull trout and west slope cutthroat trout?
 - The watersheds that these events occur in contain grizzly bears, wolverines, elk and other species sensitive to motorized traffic; what consideration is given to protect them?

 4. **Accountability:** OHV users and event organizers need to be held accountable for any environmental degradation they are causing on public lands and impacts they are having on other recreational users and outfitters. Events that cause such damage must be stopped.
 - What protective measures are employed to ensure wildlife, fisheries, water quality and other users and land uses are not unduly impacted?
 - Are organizers required to advise other users of the Forest Reserve and ensure their safety during these events?
 - Is a security deposit or performance bond required to deal with damages created by the event? What is the nature of any bonds and what is the dollar value of them and have they been used to repair damage done? What is the dollar value given to fisheries spawning beds that are destroyed?

 5. **Enforcement:** Significant resources need to be allocated to enforce OHV access limits, and the rules and regulations put in place to reduce impacts to fish and wildlife as well as other recreational users. A stronger enforcement presence on the ground during these events must be compulsory to prevent water and land damage and to issue warnings and tickets to

irresponsible OHV users. Event organizers must be responsible to pay for the increased enforcement required.

- What deviations and failures to follow the rules have been documented and what enforcement actions have been taken?
- Is there a fee charged for use of the Forest Reserve by these events, many of which are commercial endeavors?

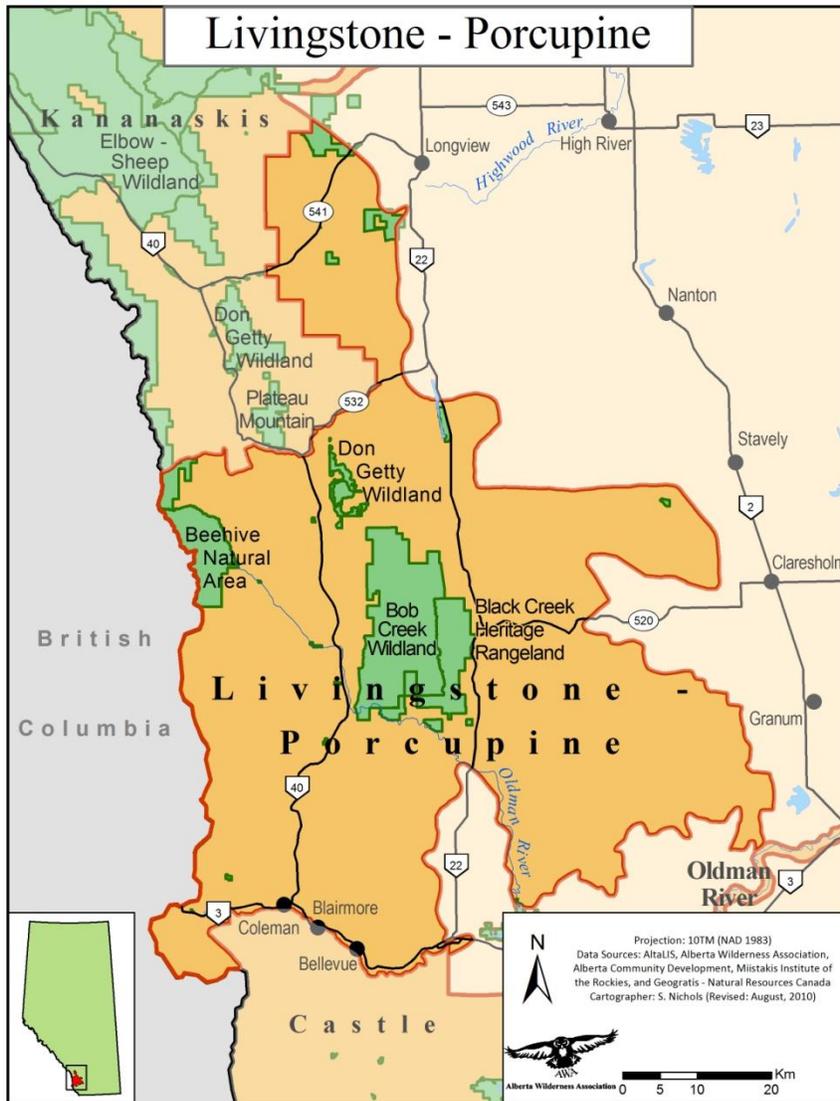
AWA knows these are detailed questions and we trust your staff will be able to provide substantial answers. We also hope you will recognize the excessive cumulative impacts of these race events and institute a moratorium forthwith. We hope we can work together to ensure these areas are restored and maintained as prestigious natural landscapes for present and future generations to enjoy responsibly.

Sincerely,

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Brittany Verbeek
AWA Conservation Specialist



AWA's Livingstone-Porcupine Area of Concern