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## **No Public Involvement in Forestry Deal**

### **Health of North Saskatchewan and Red Deer River Headwaters at Stake**

A large forest management contract on public lands in the headwaters of two major Alberta rivers is close to being renewed without any public consultation. Albertans may miss this one-in-twenty-year opportunity to provide input into the management of North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers headwaters, affecting over a million downstream users.

On the heels of widespread public opposition to forest harvest plans in the Castle, and in West Bragg Creek, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is calling for meaningful public consultation and an ecosystem, water security-based approach to forest management in the West Country of Alberta.

The current Forest Management Agreement (FMA) held by West Fraser-owned Sundre Forest Products Inc. (SFP) covers public lands between Sundre and Nordegg, Alberta, just east of Banff and Jasper National Park, and expires August 2012. Although this is public land, a behind-closed-doors renewal process between the provincial government and the forestry corporation is well underway. If renewed, this FMA will contain important economic and environmental management commitments that will be in place for the next 20 years.

“The West Country forests in this FMA are a vital provincial resource that should not be managed principally to provide a sustained yield of timber,” says Madeline Wilson, AWA conservation specialist. “They provide clean water to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, flood protection to downstream communities, diverse recreation opportunities, and habitat for a wide range of wildlife species, including threatened grizzly bear and bull trout populations.”

Management decisions made about these headwaters public lands will affect Albertans for another 20 years. “Albertans want to be involved in how public lands vital to their water supply are managed, yet here we see another closed, secretive process,” says Wilson. “AWA is calling for meaningful, accessible public consultation processes that will truly allow public interest to be reflected in forest management policies.”

**For more information:**

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