



**Release Date:** September 4, 2015

## **Castle Wilderness Protection Significant Conservation Achievement Celebrated**

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is celebrating the Alberta government's legacy decision to legally protect the Castle Wilderness as a Wildland and Provincial Park. Creating these two parks is an important step towards completing a protected areas network along Alberta's Rocky Mountain eastern slopes to secure water, wildlife habitat, and low-impact recreation values.

"We are thrilled to see the long-held vision of protecting the Castle Wilderness become a reality," says Sean Nichols, AWA conservation specialist. "It is significant that the provincial government kept their commitment and made such a forward thinking decision for the benefit of all Albertans, now and in the future."

"This decision will pave the way for urgently needed restoration of a number of Castle areas. It will help ensure the Castle's truly vital features continue to contribute to Alberta's biodiversity and ecosystem health says Cliff Wallis, AWA Secretary Treasurer. "AWA is optimistic there will be meaningful opportunities to work with the provincial government developing management plans that will ensure a wilderness legacy for generations to come."

For decades, AWA and many others have strongly supported Castle Wilderness protection. AWA cut its teeth defending Castle wilderness values as a fledgling organization in the 1960s and now will see it protected on AWA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Castle Wilderness is a region of outstanding ecological and social values. With numerous overlapping ecosystems in one relatively small area, the Castle Wilderness contains unusually high animal and plant species diversity. It is also an essential piece of an ecological puzzle; the Castle connects Canadian and US National Parks to the south and the Flathead Basin to the west with important wildlife habitats and populations in the mountains and foothills to the north.

### **For more information:**

Cliff Wallis, Alberta Wilderness Association, (cell) 403 607-1970  
Sean Nichols, AWA Conservation Specialist, (cell) 403 397-7669

