

New Protected Area to Protect Water, Create Jobs

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Blairmore, Alberta. Albertans today are celebrating the long-awaited creation of two new protected areas in Alberta. After more than 40 years of pressure from local business, advocates and community members, the remainder of the Castle Special Place has been protected as a Provincial Park and Wildland Provincial Park, completing the protection of ~1000 km² region.

“This is a great day for Albertans who love wildlife, clean water and wild places,” said James Tweedie, President of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. “The completion of the protection of the Castle is a conservation success that has been decades in the making.”

The Castle Special Place is located just north of Waterton Lakes National Park and is part of the internationally celebrated Crown of the Continent ecosystem. “This announcement puts Alberta back on the map in terms of international conservation success stories,” says Wendy Francis, Interim President of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.

“Places like the Castle are vital to our local economy,” says Jacques Thouin, owner of the Beaver Mines Store. “The certainty that comes with park status will help create jobs and tourism business opportunities in the communities that surround the Castle Special Place.”

Alan Brice, with Alberta Fly Fishing Adventures, says “Protecting the Castle is an important part of my business. People come from all over the world to fish on world-class trout streams in the Castle, and in the Crowsnest Pass. This is a good news story for business in Southwestern Alberta.”

Katie Morrison, of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Southern Alberta chapter says protection will also benefit other communities in southern Alberta. “The Castle is the source of 30% of the water for the Oldman River basin. Protecting these headwaters is essential to ensuring clean water for downstream communities such as Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.”

“Conservation groups look forward to working with the government to address broader regional issues, like logging and off highway vehicle use, through the sub-regional plans that will come out of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan” says Sean Nichols of the Alberta Wilderness Association. “We are optimistic about meaningful public participation in the development of management plans for the Castle that will support new economic opportunities while protecting this significant ecosystem.”

For more information:

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