

CASTLE-CROWN WILDERNESS COALITION

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June 1, 2015

Honourable Shannon Phillips
Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Minister of Parks and Recreation, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Deputy Government House Leader
Members of Executive Council
Executive Branch
424 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
ESRD.Minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister Phillips,

Our wholehearted congratulations on your appointment to this extremely important Cabinet position. We look forward to working with the new Government in its challenge to set the new direction for environmental protection in Alberta.

Re: the Castle Wildland

We note that the media has already been running coverage of the NDP's stated policy direction, in its election platform on the environment, to achieve protection for the Castle Wilderness Area, with the media focus reviving the inevitable conflict over Spray Lakes Sawmills' current logging plans (CBC News/ May 19th and Calgary Herald /May 21st last week).

Establishing full protection for the "Castle Special Management Area" will be a major achievement and will demonstrate the seriousness of your government's commitment to environmental leadership. It will also bring kudos to Alberta from the wider conservation community south of the border, who have watched the area's degradation over the last couple of decades with despair. It may also help restore faith in Alberta's flagging reputation for environmental stewardship.

With the recently announced SSRP in place, for all its shortcomings, your government has the unprecedented opportunity to use the leverage provided in the SSRP to achieve our shared goals for watershed, wildlife and wilderness recreational values in the Castle. We look to you to use your discretion to expand the Castle Wildland Park from protecting the rock and ice, as the SSRP does now, to protecting all the 1020sq kms of the Castle - including the more biologically important watersheds, watercourses, valleys and foothills.

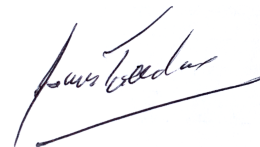
The forestry quota held by Spray Lakes Sawmills remains a direct threat to those values. Speaking on behalf of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition, for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, for the Alberta Wilderness Association, and for the Crown of the Continent Conservation Initiative, we urge you to act speedily, with your colleague, Oneil Carlier, Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, to revoke the current permits held by Spray Lakes Sawmills. These were already controversial from the day the C5 Forest Timber Management Plan was implemented, due to the seriously flawed consultation that preceded it.

Public opinion polls in 2011, as well as the MD of Pincher Creek's Community Values Assessment in 2012 show that a clear majority (almost 75%) of Southern Albertans polled saw no place for clearcut logging in the Castle. The 2012 logging protests were an inevitable outcome for those concerned citizens.

We would be happy to provide any support that may be useful to you in the way of background materials, though your staff in Alberta Parks can readily provide you with the Report from the Castle Special Place Citizens' Initiative: "Conceptual Proposal for Legislated Protected Areas" that was submitted to them in October 2009. We also provided this document (with a package of others, including the results of public opinion polls) to your colleagues Maria Fitzpatrick and Brian Mason, when our Executive Director, Carolyn Aspeslet, and Peter Sherrington, Board Director, met with them in February.

We honor your electoral achievement and look forward to working with you and the new NDP team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Tweedie", written over a horizontal line.

James Tweedie, CCWC

cc: Katie Morrison, CPAWS
Christyann Olson, AWA
Stephen Legault, CCCI