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## **Kitaskino Nuwenënë Wildland Provincial Park A New Boreal Gem for Alberta**

Permanent protection over a significant area of lands south of Wood Buffalo National Park that are important for wildlife and Indigenous communities was announced by the Alberta government this afternoon. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) welcomes the new Kitaskino Nuwenënë Wildland Provincial Park.

“AWA congratulates the First Nations, Alberta government, and the industry champions whose collaboration led to the new Kitaskino Nuwenënë Wildland Provincial Park,” says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. “We welcome this increased protection of regional wildlife habitat for the exercise of Indigenous rights and cultural practices.”

AWA believes goals that support the exercise of Treaty rights, traditional uses, and protection of Indigenous culture, including cooperative management opportunities for interested Indigenous communities, are important advancements in protected areas planning.

The Kitaskino Nuwenënë Wildland Provincial Park will protect some of the range lands of the Ronald Lake wood bison population, an important food source for nearby Indigenous communities. The threatened Red Earth and Richardson woodland caribou populations will also receive additional connected protected areas. The Park will protect more of the lower Athabasca River corridor as the River flows towards the Peace Athabasca Delta. Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl rely on the Lower Athabasca River ‘flyway’ for their spring and autumn migration; the Peace Athabasca Delta is one of the world’s largest freshwater deltas, supporting globally significant wildlife populations.

AWA urges implementation of a ‘Phase 2’ process to add additional lands to the Park and further connect and protect important wood bison, woodland caribou and migratory bird habitat.

In 2017, international investigators with UNESCO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found major shortcomings in federal and provincial governments’ management of industrial impacts and risks to the Peace-Athabasca Delta. This new ‘buffer zone’ Wildland Provincial Park south of Wood Buffalo National Park is a step forward in addressing one of the investigators’ concerns. More issues remain to adequately manage cumulative impacts and risks from oil sands and hydroelectric industries to the Peace-Athabasca Delta.

**For more information:**

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