

Plan Needed for Alberta's Protected Areas

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Photo: J. Skrajny

Protecting 17 percent of Alberta's wilderness by 2020, as part of international commitments under [Aichi Target 11](#), is a commitment the province of Alberta made in 2010. To date, plans for how Alberta will meet the target have not been released. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) supports the government's commitment and believes the protection of representative landscapes throughout the province is long overdue.

"As Albertans, we take great pride in the wild spaces that our province has to offer, and we must protect them so that future generations can know and enjoy them too," said Grace Wark, AWA Conservation Specialist. "Protected areas are not only important to the province's diverse ecosystems, but to our economy, well-being and cultural identity."

Increasing awareness and support for conserving Alberta's unique wild spaces and the species at risk that depend on them is part of AWA's core work to inspire communities to care. Wild Spaces 2020 is part of a larger movement started by groups and individuals across Canada to ensure our governments live up to their commitment to protect 17 percent of Canada's landscapes and 10 percent of oceans by 2020.

“Much of what Alberta has to offer the world comes from our breathtaking wilderness, which is under threat from decades of industrial activity and unregulated motorized recreation,” said Grace. “We need thoughtful planning to determine what areas are important to protect and which can sustain development.”

Protected areas provide us with clean air, water and resilience in cases of drought, fire and flood. They are also inherently valuable for the habitat they provide to Alberta’s iconic wildlife species, including grizzly bears, woodland caribou, sage grouse and native trout.

“Alberta’s wildlife species are in sharp decline due to habitat loss from a sprawl of urban development, industry, and roads. 75 percent of Alberta’s species at risk rely on grasslands, which are less than two percent protected,” added Joanna Skrajny, AWA Conservation Specialist. “We need a plan for how we are going to meet and exceed 17 percent - *barely the minimum required for healthy ecosystems.*”

AWA is requesting that the provincial government outline its plan to protect 17 percent of Alberta’s overall land base by 2020, with additions to the protected areas network that will focus on landscapes (like the grasslands) that are currently underrepresented and provide habitat for species at risk.

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Dedicated to the conservation of wilderness and completion of a protected areas network, AWA inspires communities to care for Alberta’s wild spaces through awareness and action.

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