

September Wild Lands Advocate Now Online

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The September issue of *Wild Lands Advocate* is online and in the mail. Much of this issue is devoted to protected areas – the essence of AWA’s mandate.

Grace Wark opens the features section of the *Advocate* by introducing you to AWA’s WildSpaces 2020 campaign (#wildspaces2020). This campaign complements a renewed protected areas commitment from the federal and provincial governments.

The goal? Conserve at least 17 percent of Canada’s landscapes and 10

percent of the country's coastal and marine areas by 2020. Canada made this international commitment in 2010.

AWA's intent? Highlight 55 wild spaces in Alberta and prod governments to fold them into an expanded network of protected areas.

Joanna Skrajny joins Grace in our second features article to draw your attention to AWA's support for including Canada's First Nations as partners with governments and ENGOs in advancing this campaign. Incorporating the views/interests of First Nations into the campaign would constitute an important step forward on the path of reconciliation.

The first of Nissa Petterson's two feature contributions reminds us that creating protected areas is one thing, ensuring we respect that protection is something else. Her focus there is on Whitehorse Wildland Provincial Park, in the Coal Branch area south of Hinton. Through a visit to the Park with Alison Dinwoodie, Kristen Anderson, and Elisabeth Beaubien, stewards of this park, Nissa deepened her appreciation of how important it is to enforce the rules established to protect those areas.

Her second article goes to the heart of the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, the international treaty Canada is bound to follow. That convention stresses the importance of protected areas because such areas are integral to realizing biodiversity targets. Nissa's piece explores this connection in the context of managing grizzly bears.

Mai-Linh Huynh looks at the government's policy towards wetlands and their restoration in the Green Area, the area making up 58 percent of Alberta. Her report is troubling. The projects that extract bitumen from Alberta's tar sands deposits in northeastern Alberta have received extensive exemptions from the government's 2013 wetlands policy. Already sacrificed to produce oil, the wetlands in this area are unlikely to ever be restored.

My contribution to the protected areas theme is found in looking at the explosive growth of utility-scale renewable energy electricity projects in Alberta. Since 2016 renewable energy utilities have set their sights on nearly 1,350 square kilometres of Alberta. Two cities the size of Edmonton could fit within this enormous footprint. My point? Green energy development must accommodate greater protection of Alberta's grasslands, parkland, and foothills.

The protected areas theme also is complemented by our interview with Dave Mayhood, one of this year's Wilderness Defender award recipients and our updates on Alberta caribou and Yellowstone grizzlies.

The issue concludes on a sad note, with a tribute to Dick Pharis. Dick—a founding member of AWA, brilliant academic, and passionate defender of Alberta's wild spaces—passed away this summer at the age of 81.

- Ian Urquhart, Editor

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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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