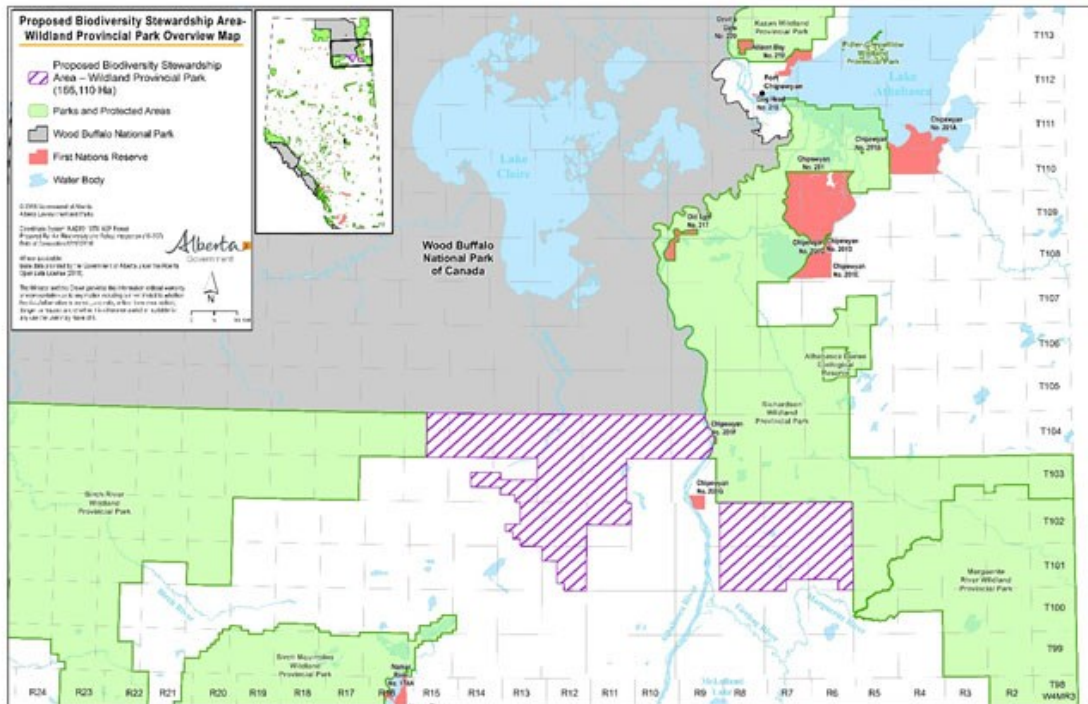


# Biodiversity Stewardship Area Proposal South of Wood Buffalo National Park Welcomed

December 13, 2018



Proposed Biodiversity Stewardship Area (purple lines). Map: Government of Alberta.

Today the Alberta government proposed permanent protection of a significant area of lands south of Wood Buffalo National Park that are important for wildlife and Indigenous communities. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) welcomes this proposal and the associated public consultation process.

“AWA congratulates the First Nations, Alberta government, and the industry champions whose collaboration led to the proposed new Biodiversity Stewardship Area - Wildland Provincial Park lands,” says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. “We strongly encourage Albertans to support this significant proposal for valuable wilderness areas.”

AWA believes that the 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 proposed Biodiversity Stewardship Area-Wildland Provincial Park lands would protect much of the range 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 important additional connected protected areas. The proposal 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.

In 2017, international investigators with UNESCO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature found major shortcomings in federal and provincial governments' management of industrial impacts and risks to the Peace-Athabasca Delta. This proposed 'buffer zone' protected area 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:**

Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, (403) 283-2025



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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