



Alberta Wilderness Association

Alberta's Forests are Treasures



Dear AWA members,

Alberta's boreal, Rocky Mountain, and foothills forests are treasures teeming with wildlife, newly born fawns, bird songs, blankets of moss, orchids hidden underneath spruce trees, creeks full of fish, squirrels, owls, and bears.

Many of you know AWA has been working for decades to raise awareness and inspire folks like you to know more about our forests and to take a stand to defend forests and the treasures within. Some of you on this newsletter list were happy to stand in freezing winter conditions to [oppose unsustainable logging in the Castle](#) wildlands. Others have written letters and made decision makers aware of concerns and the need for sound long-lasting protection for our vital forests.

As summer sees more of us out camping and hiking the trails that lead through some of our richest forests, it seemed a good time to let you know a little more about some of our day-to-day work defending Alberta's forests. Following are three highlights that will give you an idea of the work I do as AWA's Conservation Specialist taking the lead role for our staff on forests.

- AWA hosted the 25th **Fish & Forests Forum** in June. The forum is a quarterly gathering of ENGOs, scientists, and individuals concerned about the management of Alberta's forested ecosystems. The 25th forum was designed so we would review and discuss a paper entitled "Opportunities and Challenges for Intensive Silviculture in Alberta, Canada" by Pinno et al. (2021). Intensive silviculture refers to a style of forest management where trees are planted at a higher density, commercial thinning is implemented at 35 years, and harvest occurs at 50 years (compared to basic silviculture in Alberta that operates on 80-year rotations). The authors suggest a zonation approach where certain forests are managed intensively, others extensively, and some are not harvested to preserve ecosystem values. They also suggest that using non-native tree species could increase growth and therefore economic value of forests. The group raised concerns about the dangers of managing forests as plantations, including the loss of biodiversity, introduction of exotic species, and lack of enough emphasis on setting aside forests to be protected for

ecosystem values. The next Fish & Forests Forum will be hosted in the fall – let me know if you would like to be included.

- In May, following concerns and calls from members in the **Chip Lake** area, AWA sent a [statement of concern](#) to Minister Nate Horner. We learned from those supporters that a request for proposals issued by Alberta Forestry would grant a **commercial timber permit** including forests northwest of Chip Lake (west-central Alberta near Wildwood and Entwistle). AWA is concerned about logging these forests because they are an important regional habitat stronghold for wildlife species such as lynx, wolverine, marten, fisher, wolves, bears, and host a tremendous variety of bird life including many species of owls and raptors. In addition, they support elk, mule deer, white tailed deer, and provide important moose wintering habitat. The area would likely be difficult to reforest because of its overlap with grazing reserves. AWA asked that Alberta Forestry not proceed with assigning harvest allocations in this area. We received a response from Minister Horner on July 7th, 2022, but he did not commit to abandoning this request or even leaving the forests northwest of Chip Lake out of any commercial timber permits that are issued. This harvest allocation has been granted to Canfor/Millar Western. Writing letters to the minister lets them know others are concerned - to express your concern you can find AWA's letter on our website [here](#).
- At the October 29th, 2019 meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Devin Dreeshen stated that the annual allowable cut of Alberta's forests could sustainably be increased by 33%. From the time of his announcement AWA tried unsuccessfully to find out what analysis had been done to support this statement. In the end, on March 16th, 2022, AWA requested the following records under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP Act):
 - the government report/analysis that concluded that a 33% increase in annual allowable cut was sustainable;
 - briefing notes/emails/advice to Minister Dreeshen concerning the sustainability of a 33% increase in annual allowable cut;

- briefing notes/emails/ to Minister Dreeshen pertaining to the subject of Alberta's annual allowable cut.

AWA received a letter and records relating to this FOIP request on June 3rd, 2022. The package consisted of a single page communications and public engagement document regarding fibre access. Seven pages of records were withheld under section 24 of the FOIP Act because they could reasonably be expected to reveal advice, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options of public bodies. AWA has requested a review of this FOIP, because we believe that these documents should be available to the public as they pertain to the management of public resources. We are also scheduling meetings with civil servants to determine the best way to obtain this information.

AWA's vision for forest management is that Alberta will focus on forests as ecosystems, rather than as resources to be exploited. Your contacts, your engagement, and your support for all of us at AWA makes a difference. Thank you!

With best wishes for some great days of adventure in our forests,

Devon Earl
AWA Conservation Specialist





I hope you come across some curious deer on your next trip to the forest. Photo ©
Devon Earl



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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