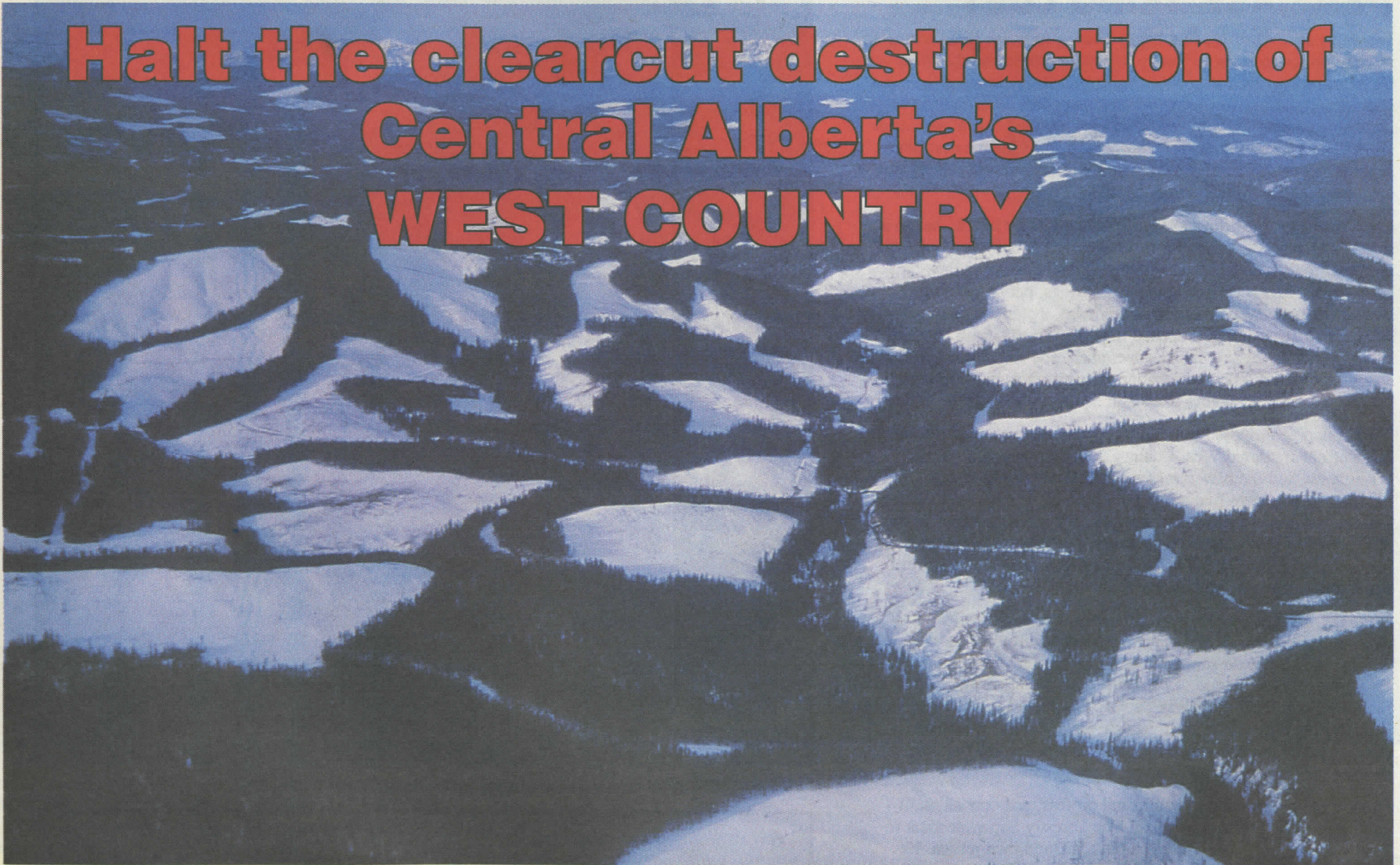


Halt the clearcut destruction of Central Alberta's WEST COUNTRY



SAVE the BIGHORN COUNTRY

"We want to legislatively protect this area as the Bighorn Country. If Calgaryans have a Kananaskis Country for their future, it is only fair that we Central Albertans have a Bighorn Country for our future," states Dr. Timothy Grier of the Friends of the West Country.

He points out that two-thirds of Alberta is prairie. Calgary, the closest big city to the Rocky Mountains, has the legislatively protected Kananaskis Country available for its recreational use. Kananaskis also acts as a buffer for Banff National Park. Because the Rocky Mountains veer to the northwest, Edmonton is far from the mountains. But Red Deer, halfway between these two big cities, is only a short 60 miles to Rocky Mountain House, where the mountains come into view.

Rocky Mountain House and the community of Sundre, located 40 miles southwest of Rocky Mountain House, sit on nature's border between the prairies and the forested foothills. This region has long been known as the West Country. Sunpine Forest Product's Forest Management Area begins at these towns, in the closest part of the West Country, and extends west to Forestry Trunk Road. This road separates the productive forest lands to the east and the sensitive, low-productivity, high-elevation forests to the west.

The area between the Forestry Trunk Road and Banff and Jasper National Parks, bounded by the Sheep River watershed and the Red Deer River to the south and the Brazeau River to the north, has been used for years by recreationalists, guides and outfitters. It's called Bighorn Country. This area must have protected area status like Kananaskis County does to the south.

Sunpine is worried that discussions about the fate of the Bighorn Country, where they want to expand operations, and their management of their FMA lands in West Country will involve people outside of local communities. They are counting on residents in Rocky Mountain House and Sundre being more concerned with

current forestry jobs than protecting recreational and eco-tourism opportunities for the future.

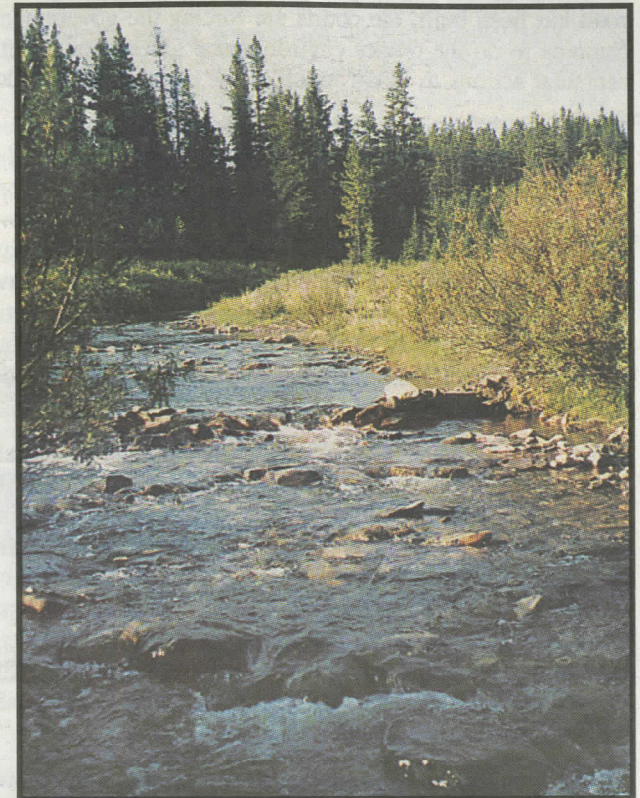
But these forest lands belong to all Albertans, including those living in Red Deer. If Sunpine is allowed to continue industrializing and trampling the wilderness values of the West Country, the entire region's scenic values, tourism opportunities and natural biodiversity will be lost forever and the local economy will lose out.

Alberta Government studies reveal that, on a hectare per hectare comparison, Alberta's provincial parks and wilderness areas contribute about the same amount to the economy as do agriculture and forestry. Proposed and existing protected areas within Bighorn Country would contribute about 77.7 million dollars of economic activity annually and around 1,756 person-years of employment. There are at least 30 ecotourism operators, guides and outfitters who already depend on the wildlands of Bighorn Country.

In the year 2020, when the World Bank predicts that most clearcut logging of oldgrowth frontier forest will have ceased (the supply gone), there will be over two billion tourists and a huge international tourist market.

These tourists do not want to visit or spend their money to see clearcuts, oilwell heads and gas flares. They, like most native Albertans, want the opportunity to see a brook trout breaking the surface of a clear mountain stream, glimpse a grizzly bear grazing in an alpine meadow, and enjoy the sight of orchids blooming on a rich oldgrowth forest floor.

The Friends of the West Country and Western Canada Wilderness Committee encourage you to join with us in embracing and making the Bighorn Country a legislated protected area that excludes industrial resource extraction—protecting a treasure for all Albertans, all Canadians, international visitors and future generations. Bighorn Country needs your support now.



The West Country is world renowned for its world-class pristine trout streams.

"The 'West Country' is regarded by residents of Red Deer, as by all Albertans, as an important recreational, economic and environmental asset in which they have a direct stake."

— Gall Surkan, Mayor of Red Deer

THE WEST COUNTRY - PARADISE BEING LOST

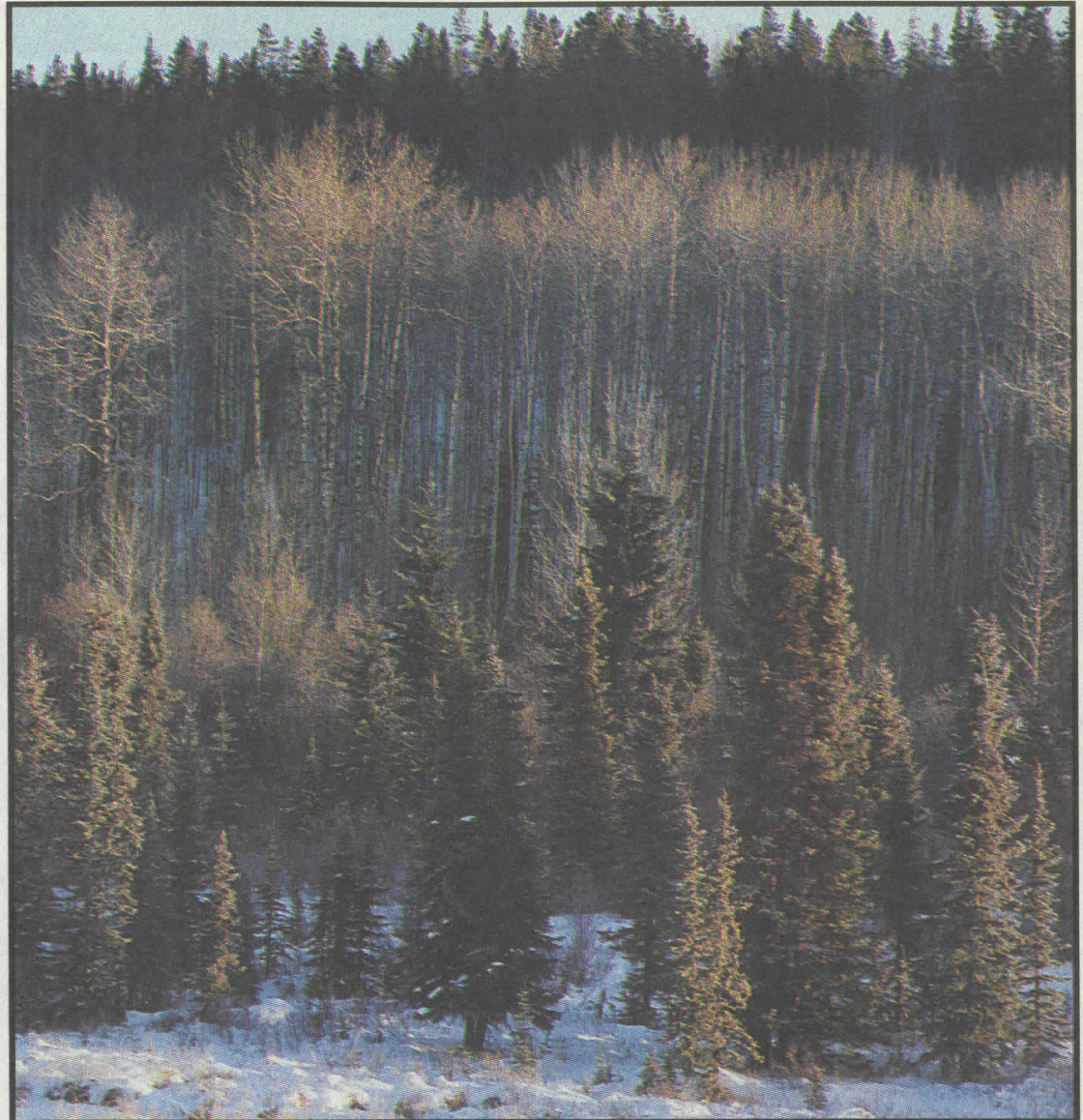
Ten years ago, when we first began hearing rumours about a massive forestry project coming to Rocky Mountain House and the West Country, no one even vaguely imagined what was in store for our community and our forests. Our municipal councillors assured us there was nothing to worry about and even denied that a mega-mill was planned for our doorstep. This set the stage for the next ten years of deceit, abuse of public trust and destruction of our natural environment. The Sunpine saga began.

Local residents, unwilling to sacrifice their quality of life, health and safety, began a four-year-long battle to stop the building of a new mill near their homes. We spent tens of thousands of dollars on a court case. There were appeal board hearings, public meetings, demonstrations and petitions. In every case, the public overwhelmingly rejected the proposed mill site. Finally, with our legal appeal pending, the provincial government and Sunpine decided to change the mill's proposed location. The site may have been better, but the company's logging plans still stank!

Then, Sunpine proposed to build a mainline logging road through the heart of our treasured West Country. Over the next two years, government and industry representatives continued to deceive and mislead us. We were first assured by Sunpine and the municipality that the mainline logging road was only a vague concept. During one tense meeting they claimed that it would never be built if there was public concern. The next day we learned that Sunpine had already applied for stage one approval of the road.

Outraged, we demanded a public process. Local circulation of a petition garnered over 300 signatures in opposition to this road. Fewer than 10 people supported it. Then Minister of Alberta Environmental Protection, Ty Lund's, own professional foresters and biologists said that "there was no need for the road" and that there were "viable alternatives to it" which would cause a minimum of environmental damage instead of the "horrendous and ongoing damage" the proposed mainline road would cause.

Despite the overwhelming public and professional opposition, it continued to be business as usual. The Forestry Superintendent in Rocky Mountain House approved the road, and then retired. He resurfaced as Ty Lund's campaign organizer and was rewarded with an appointment to the Alberta Natural Resources Conservation Board.



In winter the West Country's wild forests are a beautiful sight to behold.



which rules on critical environmental issues for the entire province.

Two reviews of this road decision (in court and by the Provincial Ombudsman) confirmed that the process regarding its approval was seriously flawed and grossly inadequate. Now, four years after the road has been built, the courts are forcing the government and Sunpine to do the proper environmental assessments...but too late for remedial actions to repair much of the damage already done.

When, in 1992, the government signed over the West Country to Sunpine Forest Products to be clearcut, it guaranteed in law that the West Country's prime value, as far as government was concerned, was "timber production." Every other resource value provided by the forest takes second place to fibre production. We now have an industrial tree farm. The Friends of the West Country have taken hundreds of photographs of the ongoing clearcut destruction. We have worked tirelessly to show the massive environmental, economic and social abuses this Forest Management Area (FMA) designation has generated.

When the original FMA was signed in 1992 the annual allowable cut in the region was less than 350,000 cubic metres (about 10,000 truck loads a year). Even then, the sustainability of this level of cut was questioned. But this wasn't enough for greedy Sunpine and its government supporters. First, in 1995, without any public review or input from the forestry officials in Rocky Mountain House, Minister Lund granted Sunpine an additional 60,000 or so hectares of public land to be clearcut. Then he almost tripled the cut to 1,200,000 cubic metres annually and made the increase retroactive for four years, all without any public review!

Today Sunpine is still not satisfied. It wants more land to clearcut. Sunpine has already begun to log west of Forestry Trunk Road and, we've learned, has secret plans to clearcut up to the Banff National Park boundary. If they are not stopped, nothing will be left!

Without massive public opposition the Bighorn Country, where Sunpine is greedily expanding, and the West Country as a whole are doomed. The Alberta government and the forest industry see our forests only as sources of fibre and predict that as industry moves into more intensive forest management, production will increase 30 to 50 percent province-wide. Is this the legacy we Albertans want to leave our children?

- Steve Haupt, President of Friends of the West Country



Clearcutting has already begun in part of the Bighorn Country west of Forestry Trunk Road. All of this area is a high-elevation sensitive site that must be off-limits to logging and other industrial developments.

Article by Chuck Shipley, retired environmental protection, fish and wildlife officer

In the past twenty years, since I moved to Rocky Mountain House, the increase in industrial activity has been colossal. There has been little consideration for aesthetics. Clearcuts, drilling rigs, pipelines and pump jacks are quickly becoming our vista, interrupted by the odd tree and mountain.

If you believe that this is the best way to utilize one of the most sought-after recreational and outdoor tourist destinations in Alberta, you obviously agree with misdirected government policies. If you believe the current government development policies are wrong, you are one of the rest of us.

Our current government conducts its business to satisfy industry. The vision is twenty to thirty years for petroleum developments on a given site and logging an area until the commercially valuable trees are all gone. Yes, there's reforestation, but ask the companies how long it takes for a seedling to grow into a tree of merchantable size at 4,000 to 6,000 feet altitude. We can't wait that long and the tourists won't!

Tourists from other countries who have virtually no wilderness to speak of actively seek areas like the West Country. The government currently is doing business for short-term gain and our children's long-term pain. When the petroleum and trees run out, there will be bare mountain slopes left and metal buildings and pump jacks to look at and, under foot, contaminated ground. Tourists do not want to visit industrial wastelands.

It could be argued that the energy and forest industries have made this province what it is. In the new millennium, their practices must be modified to reflect our changing values and our need to preserve wilderness for the future. Our beautiful West Country could be home to a truly sustainable tourism and eco-tourism industry. But only if we have the energy and courage to prevent its industrial destruction.

Chronology of efforts to protect the Rocky Mountain House Area

1981 - Alberta government proposes to establish and protect "David Thompson Country" (as a match to Kananaskis Country to the south where development policy was based on maintaining tourist values). The area west of Forestry Trunk Road is designated as a Watershed Protection Forest.

1986 - The Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area is named by the government and appears on Alberta road maps. However it is not legally established under Alberta's protected area legislation and consequently receives no long term protection from industrial development.

1988 - Sunpine, owned by the Creelman Bros. from New Brunswick, bought out the Revelstoke operations at Sundre. There's no attached Forest Management Area (FMA) to guarantee wood supply for the mill.

1992 - The Sunpine FMA is signed for an area roughly the size of the province of Prince Edward Island. Creelmans sell out. Sunpine is now owned by Bruce Buchanan and Louisiana-Pacific in a 50/50 partnership.

1995 - Minister Ty Lund triples Sunpine's Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) without public consultation and grants Sunpine an additional 60,000 ha. of land to log. Clearcuts become visible all over the West Country.

1996 - Louisiana-Pacific sell out its 50 percent share to Buchanan who now becomes Sunpine's sole owner.

May 1997 - Sunpine's Public Advisory Committee is disbanded.

November 1997 - Sunpine independently forms its own Public Involvement Round Table (without public input), establishing a closed-door policy on meetings. The table restricts public participation and fails to inform the public on some issues.

1998 Buchanan sells Sunpine to Weldwood, a multi-national forestry company.

1999 - Sunpine starts logging Cripple Creek, west of Forestry Trunk Road, in the traditional Watershed Protection Forest.

1999 Fifteen groups and a number of concerned citizens come together to form the "Bighorn Country" Wildlands Coalition to pursue the establishment of the Bighorn Country Recreation Area and stop the logging west of the Forestry Trunk Road.

The Alberta Council of Trout Unlimited Canada believes that clearcut logging is not an appropriate land use in headwater forests. Protection of the headwater forest



Coalition Launched to Protect "Bighorn Country"

Local citizens, outdoor recreationalists, ecotourism operators, guides and outfitters from the Sundre, Nordegg, Rocky Mountain House and Red Deer areas, along with provincial organizations, have formed a coalition to promote the protection of Bighorn Country.

Part of the proposed protected area within Bighorn Country is the Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area, which was named by the government in 1986 and zoned for "Prime Protection and Critical Wildlife" but has never received legislative protection.

cover in the proposed Bighorn Country Recreation Area would provide watershed and fisheries benefits that would be noticed far beyond the local area."

- Tony Blake, President

Alberta Council of Trout Unlimited

The Council of Canadians are over 100,000 strong. Central Albertans' water comes from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. We need to be watchful that the quantity and quality of our water are not jeopardized by short term economic development."

- The Council of Canadians, Red Deer Chapter

For the people of the Red Deer region, the joy of the Bighorn is that it is close enough to drive there for a day but big enough to wander through, on foot or horseback, for weeks. This vibrant treasury of Alberta's natural diversity is a place to enjoy for its beauty and peace; to respect for its intrinsic wilderness values and, above all, a place to accept our responsibility to protect its vulnerable, interwoven ecology - which is so easy for man to destroy and so completely beyond our ability to re-create."

- Margaret Coutis, President

Red Deer River Naturalists

"As Christians we are called to be stewards over God's creation. We have an obligation to be involved in the decisions concerning our environment, including the West Country. We strongly urge the protection of this area from clearcut logging."

- Motion passed by the Church Council of Sunnybrook United Church (Red Deer)

At a recent meeting it was agreed as a millennium project, the greatest legacy that the seniors today could leave to future generations would be a pristine unpolluted environment.

- Don Campbell and Eldred Stamp

Co-Chair of the Central Alberta Council on Aging's Millennium Committee

It will mean recreation-based economic development rather than more industrial activity in the area west of the Forestry Trunk Road (Secondary Highway #734).

The Coalition is pursuing the establishment of Bighorn Country as a place where:

- * the natural landscape is maintained and protected for present and future generations;
- * the area is managed for outdoor recreation, environmental education and ecotourism;
- * the area is also managed for the protection of wildland landscapes, watersheds, wilderness and ecological resources, wildlife, natural ecological processes, and the natural and cultural heritage;
- * tourism development provides services necessary for the enjoyment of wildland recreation; and
- * there is no new surface-disturbance from industry and no new industrial dispositions.

"We're not asking the government to pour money into the area for roads and tourism facilities. There are already operators there and enough public roads," explains Dave Jensen of Ram River Outdoorsmen. "We're asking government to ensure long-term protection of the area for this and future generations to enjoy and in doing so, to restore some balance and provide an environmentally-sustainable development alternative to resource extraction."

"We Albertans have been complacent about our wilderness for too long," notes Lane Moore of the Lazy M Ranch. We ALL must realize that they are rapidly disappearing. Decisive action is imperative before they are all but gone!"

For more information contact the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society at 780-422-5988 and the Alberta Wilderness Association at 403-283-2025.

Joint Position Statement of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and Friends of the West Country

The West Country has traditionally been known for its world-class trout streams. They continue to be fished by fly fishers from around the world. These streams are extremely productive because the oldgrowth pine forests shade the waters and keep them cold; and the forest floor mosses, natural bogs and wild grasses filter the water and keep it pure.

These trout-rich streams, found along the West Country's eastern slopes, are in a "Protection Forest" which has theoretically been protected by government policy for decades. Now, despite this designation, Sunpine is logging in this spectacular country, in the very shadow of the Rocky Mountains. Its clearcut logging not only threatens water quality and trout fishing but also present and future tourism.

Even though Alberta's protected areas policy, *Special Places 2000*, has generally failed to provide adequate conservation for Alberta's natural ecosystems, local people are still given a powerful say in selecting which

areas are to be protected and the form of protection.

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee and the Friends of the West Country do not envision the proposed 750,000 ha Bighorn Country Wildlands Recreation Area as being an area preserved exclusively for its ecological and wilderness values. We see it as a place where hikers, fisherman, nature tourists, photographers, horseback riders and ATV users may co-exist. All can enjoy the Bighorn Country. By being inclusive, not exclusive, we know that the vast majority of local people will support our Bighorn proposal.

Although ATVs have the capacity to negatively impact the environment, we much prefer them to clearcutters in the Bighorn Country. The impacts of horses and ATVs are akin to scratches and bruises, while the impacts of clearcutting are akin to the amputation of arms and legs. **Bighorn Country needs the support of all outdoor recreationists to make its protection a reality.**
PLEASE LEND YOUR FULL SUPPORT NOW!

GO AND EXPERIENCE FOR YOURSELF THE BIGHORN COUNTRY WILDLANDS

Nordegg is located at the gateway to the Bighorn Wildlands Area. At a glance it appears small but it has a great variety of services for tourists, including novice recreationalists. Many families depend on Bighorn Country staying wilderness for their livelihoods – another good reason to protect it! Go and experience the Bighorn region and you will discover why it is such a special place that must be saved from industrial development. Here is a list of some of the services in the Nordegg Area and their phone numbers.

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Shunda Creek Hostel (accommodation) | 403-721-2140 |
| Fireweed Pottery and Woodcarving Studio | 403-721-2199 |
| Cheechako Cabins & Wilderness Training | 403-721-2230 |
| Husky Wilderness Adventures (dogsledding) | 403-721-2121 |
| Emergency Response Institute (search and rescue training) | 403-721-2121 |
| Frontier Lodge (complete packages - accommodations, food and outdoor activities) | 403-721-2202 |
| Goldeye Centre (complete packages) | 403-721-2102 |
| 3 Bar 3 Campground Services | 403-721-2333 |
| Rock and Water Adventures (outdoor guiding) | 403-721-2022 |
| Centre for Outdoor Education & Sheiling Mountain Lodge (complete packages) | 403-721-2208 |
| Baldy Mountain Trail Rides (horseback riding) | 403-721-2030 |
| Colesium Gift Shop | 403-721-2041 |
| Coalminer's Cafe | 403-721-2041 |
| Nordegg Museum | 403-721-2625 |
| Nordegg Resort Lodge (hotel & restaurant) | 403-721-3757 |
| Beer Cabin (liquor store) | 403-721-2127 |
| McKenzie Trails West (horseback riding) | 403-721 2132 |
| Voyageur Adventure Tours (river tours) | 403-845-3381 |
| Klondike Ventures (dogsledding) | 1-877-846-7878 (toll free) |
| Lazy M Ranch (complete packages) | 403-722-3053 |
| Ahlstrom Air Division (heli-tours) | 403-721-2203 |
| Fat Boyz Mountain Bike Adventures (bike rentals and guides) | 403-721-3712 |
| Nordegg Historic Golf Course | 403-721-2003 |
| Nordegg Community Association | 403-721-3990 |

Make Democracy Work to Save Central Alberta's West Country

Let the Alberta law-makers know how you feel about slowing logging down to an ecologically sustainable level in the West Country and protecting the Bighorn Country west of Forestry Trunk Road from further industrial developments. This region is a precious recreational asset; an essential part of Central Alberta's prized natural heritage-- a heritage that must be conserved.

Write to:
Premier Ralph Klein
Legislature Bldgs.
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Phone 780-427-2391
Fax 780-427-1349

AND

Minister of Alberta
Environmental Protection
Honourable Gary Mar
(same address as above)
Phone 780-427-2391
Fax 780-422-6259



The infamous mainline road through the West Country that local citizens opposed in vain.

CREDITS

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Official Provincial Petition

ESTABLISH THE BIGHORN COUNTRY PROTECTED AREA

To the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta in Legislature Assembled this petition of Albertan voters and other concerned citizens humbly showeth:

and the potential long-term economic benefits to all Albertans of having this world-class wilderness protected are much greater than to receive the short-term profits of logging and gas and oil developments in this high elevation foothills region of the Rocky Mountains, and;

WHEREAS a world-class protected area in the Rocky Mountain House area is vital to the protection of wildlife including grizzlies, wolves and Alberta's scenic beauty.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the undersigned Albertan voters and other concerned citizens, humbly pray that your Honourable House may be pleased to pass the necessary legislation to establish and protect for all time the Bighorn Wildland Recreation Area; and, in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

NAME (please print)

SIGNATURE

FULL ADDRESS (please include postal code)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Please return filled and partially filled petitions to: Western Canada Wilderness Committee - Alberta Branch, 310-10168 100A St., Edmonton AB T5J 0R6 by December 31, 1999.

Democracy needs everyone's participation to successfully protect the public's interest.

Yes! I want to help establish a Bighorn Country Protected Area for the citizens of Central Alberta to treasure and enjoy ...like Calgary's prized Kananaskis Country!

I am writing or phoning Premier Ralph Klein and Honourable Gary Mar, Minister of Alberta Environment Protection, and conveying my feelings about protecting the West Country from excessive industrialization and establishing, through legislation, permanent protection for the Bighorn Country west of Forestry Trunk Road.

I want to help fund your campaigns to save the West Country and Bighorn Country.
Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$500 _____ other to help you succeed.
WCWC's Federal Registered Charitable Tax Number is 11929 3009 RR0001

I want to become a Member renew my Membership. Enclosed is my \$30 annual Individual Membership fee.

I would like to be a Sustaining-Family Member. Here is \$52 (\$1 per week for wilderness preservation).
Call our toll free line 1-800-661-9453 to donate and become a Wilderness Committee member (or renew) and save time and trees!

Name (please print) _____ Address _____
City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____ Phone _____



Please clip and send to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee-Alberta Branch (WCWC-AB), 310-10168 100A St. Edmonton, AB T5J 0R6.