

Castle logging to occur despite contrary claims

By Derek Clouthier, October 5th, 2011

The Castle Special Management Area, located in Crowsnest Pass, southwest of Cochrane, is scheduled to be logged by Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS), contrary to a recent statement by the Alberta Foothills Network (AFN) that indicated that there would be a delay in the effort due to public letters.

AFN, which boasts the membership of several environmental groups such as the Sierra Club of Canada, has gone to great lengths to avert SLS from logging the region, saying the area is a vital, protected ecosystem.

“Southern Alberta isn’t short of fence posts or lumber,” said Dianne Pachal of the Sierra Club of Canada. “It’s short of the three big Ws: water, wildlife habitat and wild lands.”

SLS, however, indicated that logging will continue as scheduled, with the operation likely to commence this winter and the previous report of June being the date were not accurate.

The company also differs in opinion with the AFN and the network’s reasons behind its disapproval of SLS’s actions.

Sustainable Resource Development spokesperson Dave Ealey said in a previous interview that the Castle River area was earmarked as one of Alberta’s special areas where logging can take place.

“This area has been going for almost a century through managed uses,” Ealey indicated on April 28. “Only one third of the forest is available and only one per cent is cut in any particular year.”

Logging in the Crowsnest Forest is permitted under the C5 Forest Management Plan recently approved by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). With two-thirds of provincial forests allocated to SLS currently under assessment for FSC certification, the provincial government controls logging in the area.

“We believe we have good forest management,” said SLS woodlands manager Gord Lehn.

The management plan permits annual timber quotas to SLS up to the year 2026.

The Alberta Foothills Network covers the foothills of the Rockies from Kananaskis Country to the Waterton Glacier International Peace Park.

The Castle area is one of 81 protected areas in Alberta.