

Stop Castle logging rallies held in Calgary and Edmonton

By Curt Derbyshire Contributor, February 22nd, 2012

On Valentine's Day, roughly 170 people showed up at rallies in Calgary and Edmonton to show support and voice their opposition to the logging of the Castle Wilderness Area and West Bragg Creek by Spray Lakes Sawmills.

"Albertans love their forests, their Wildlands, their parks and recreation areas," said Sarah Elmeligi of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. "While logging has a place in the economy in Alberta, ensuring places like West Bragg Creek are prioritized for the use and enjoyment of visitors and residents to Kananaskis, and the Castle Special Place is protected for Southern Alberta's water supply is important."

The rallies were the latest part of an ongoing effort, which featured a lengthy protest, by a locally organized group that is seeking to garner Castle official government protection as a wilderness area. The protests delayed the work by Spray Lakes for several weeks but led to court orders and the eventual arrest of four men. The court date for both the appeal of the court order and those arrested is currently set for next Friday, February 24 in Calgary.

Gordon Petersen of Beaver Mines, Alberta has been instrumental in leading the group's efforts and traveled to Calgary for the rally.

"The government protected The Castle Special Place in 1998. Visitors and residents love the Castle," said Petersen. "75 per cent of local residents want to see that protection made permanent as a Wildland Park."

Regardless of what takes place next week in court, Petersen said that they are currently exploring legal efforts to challenge the logging of the area. Given that the Spray Lakes contractor has started road building at the site, the group is looking to operate as quickly as possible.

"We will definitely be taking legal action to see that the logging permit be revoked. Time is of the essence in order to minimize the damage being done by Spray Lakes Sawmills."

Art Works for Wild Spaces has jumped in to show their environmental support for the Castle with their recent Yarn Bomb art installation along Highway 774, four kilometres south of the original protest area. The project features handmade afghans wrapped around a selection of trees as a metaphor for nurturing and warmth.

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“There is a silly element to the end result of a yarn bomb, one that brings a smile to the viewers face,” said Barbara Amos, as spokesperson for the group. “However, it is wise to remember that this art event was born from the exhausting effort and hard work behind creating a voice for wild spaces.”

The art project is temporary and after a period of time, the trees will be unwrapped.