

Castle Protest Leads to Arrests

February, 9th, 2012 By Curt Derbyshire

Contributor

Late on the afternoon of Monday, January 30th, the group protesting the logging in the Castle wilderness by Spray Lakes Sawmills was notified of a court order that prohibited their presence within one-hundred meters of the permit area. RCMP gave the protesters until Wednesday morning at 8 AM to vacate the area and stated that although the tents that had been set up were technically property of the government at the moment, they would allow them to be removed by the owners.

On Wednesday morning, with a large media contingent on site, the RCMP arrived, with donuts and coffee provided for all, and stated that they would be enforcing the court order and all those who did not want to be arrested would have to leave the area.

Most of the group headed down the road, near the cattle guard where they gathered and continued to display their signs. However, four men remained at the location, refusing to move, and were subsequently arrested and driven to Pincher Creek police station, where after a few hours they were processed and released. All are scheduled to appear in court on February 24th.

The protest group has appealed both the original enforcement order and the court order that stemmed from it and was used last week to clear the site. While the enforcement order remains in administrative appeal for the moment, a court date was held on Friday, February 3rd in Calgary in regards to the court order enacted by the RCMP.

Gordon Petersen said the turnout was on Friday morning was quite large. They asked for an adjournment, allowing them properly prepare, and were given February 24th as the date to reconvene. Petersen said that the support showed what a contentious issue this was in the province and will hopefully help them to expedite the process.

“There were a lot of supporters there on Friday,” said Petersen. “We’re now in the process of going through affidavits and putting our case together. “

Petersen said that they asked for Spray Lakes and their contractor to wait until their appeal was heard later in the week, but road building began at the site almost immediately after the public was cleared.

“We’re not happy about the situation but we’re not going to stop just because they started on Wednesday,” said Petersen.

“It’s shocking, shameful and almost undemocratic that despite near unanimous opposition the government remains deaf. Law-abiding citizens have had to go to the last resort and be arrested.”

The group intends to not only fight the enforcement orders that have been served but to challenge the approval of any logging licenses in the Castle.

A rally is being planned in Calgary for noon Wednesday, February 8th at the McDougall Center.