

## **Poll shows strong opposition to Castle logging**

Area has seen a 'continual degradation of the ecological resources'

By Trevor Scott Howell, March 17, 2011

Opposition is growing against plans to clear-cut forest in the Castle Special Management Area — deemed a protected area.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Lethbridge College Citizen Society, more than 85 per cent of residents surveyed in Lethbridge and Coaldale oppose plans by Spray Lakes Sawmills to clear-cut 3,750 trees starting this June.

In 1998, the province declared the Castle area, which extends from Kananaskis Country south to Waterton Lakes, to be protected from logging as one of Alberta's 81 special places.

However, the province later legislated it as a forest land-use zone rather than a provincial park — opening the door to widespread logging.

"In the last 12 years that the Castle has been a forest land-use zone we've seen continual degradation of the ecological resources," says Sarah Elmeligi, senior conservation planner for Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

Arguments that the area needs to be logged to prevent forest fires and halt the pine beetle infestation are "misleading," says Elmeligi.

The pine beetle is native to the area and doesn't pose the same risk as it does to B.C. or northern Alberta forests, she says.

Prescribed burning, selective logging and managing human activity are more effective methods of preventing widespread fires, she adds.

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