

*Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter (CPAWS SAB)
Strategic Plan 2013-2018*

1. Introductory Statement

This strategic plan has been developed by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter (CPAWS SAB) to provide direction for the CPAWS SAB chapter for the next five years. This overarching document will guide the chapter as it develops its annual work plans and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its relevancy.

2. Background

Established in 1967, as a volunteer-driven grassroots organization, CPAWS SAB started its work in response to commercial development pressures in Banff National Park. The work of CPAWS SAB helped shape the foundation of the organization as a nationally recognized conservation organization. CPAWS SABs successes include construction of overpasses over the TransCanada Highway in Banff National Park to facilitate wildlife movement and reduce wildlife collisions and establishing the Elbow-Sheep and Bow Valley protected areas.

While maintaining a strong focus on protection of provincial and national mountain parks, over the years CPAWS SAB has expanded to include landscape-scale conservation and stewardship work in Southern Alberta. Today CPAWS SAB is one of thirteen CPAWS chapters across the country that focuses on protecting parks and natural ecosystems. Our chapter prides itself in being a leader in landscape-scale wilderness conservation, national and provincial park management, establishment and protection of parks, and environmental education.

3. Context

Southern Alberta contains a diversity of ecosystems which support a variety of plant and wildlife species. The Southern Alberta ecosystems maintain natural functions and processes and provide important environmental services such as clean air, water and natural adaption to climate change. Current management of natural landscapes in Southern Alberta has led to increased degradation of many of these areas, largely due to population growth, the cumulative effects of unregulated and/or poorly regulated recreational activity and industrial development.

Large landscape conservation, headwaters protection and land-use planning are imperative for ensuring that natural areas and natural systems in Alberta persist and are resilient in the face of continued or increased land and resource use, water shortages and a changing climate.

4. Vision

Southern Alberta will become a new and inspiring standard for the conservation of nature. We will protect the tapestry of life in the Southern Alberta landscape and waterscape and establish a new global standard for protecting the integrity of wilderness areas.

Southern Alberta is home to a world renowned network of parks and wilderness areas where best practices prioritize environmental and human health. Albertans understand, use and respect these areas for their inherent ecological values and their contribution to a high quality of life.

5. Mission

CPAWS envisages a healthy ecosphere where people experience and respect natural ecosystems. CPAWS Southern Alberta chapter is a respected leader in the conservation and stewardship of the Southern Albertan landscape. We strive to educate, collaborate, engage and empower Albertans in developing solutions that safeguard, connect and expand parks and wilderness areas.

6. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles for our organization are:

- We believe nature, wilderness and wild places have intrinsic value unto themselves.
- We base our decisions and opinions on science-based research and citizen involvement, guided by the precautionary principle.
- We believe that healthy ecosystems have a significant positive impact on human health.
- We believe that healthy, functioning and diverse ecosystems are more resilient to climate change and thus more opportunity for nearby human communities to adapt as well.
- We believe that people are an integral part of the ecosystem and we encourage and empower people through education and awareness to share in the responsibility of stewardship of the ecosystem.
- We promote collaboration and cooperation with industry, governments, Aboriginal peoples, private citizens, educators and other stakeholders for conserving and managing the wise use of the landscape for our children and great-grandchildren.
- We respect other perspectives and interests.
- We believe that an informed and engaged citizenry is important to public debate and solving environmental and wilderness issues.
- We are politically non-partisan. We support principles and policies, not individuals or parties.
- We proactively develop solutions based in our approach to conservation.
- Our direct success is measured by engagement with Albertans, on-the-ground protection and management and stewardship of parks wilderness areas.

7. Strategic Priorities

The CPAWS SAB Chapters mission is anchored in land conservation and stewardship of a large, interconnected landscape perspective. The strategic priorities that define our operations and direct our efforts are:

1. Strengthen the network of interconnected protected, wilderness and natural areas throughout Southern Alberta;
2. Ensure the effective stewardship of Alberta's national and provincial parks and wilderness areas;
3. Ensure Albertan's value and respect our parks and wilderness areas through education, appreciation, engagement and experience.

8. Regional Focus Areas:

To focus our conservation efforts we concentrate on three regional areas in Southern Alberta. CPAWS SAB's regional focus areas include Alberta's Southern Eastern Slopes, Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks and Grasslands. Conservation objectives for each focus area are described below:

A. Alberta's Southern Eastern Slopes

- Ensure that established protected areas are managed to prioritize ecological integrity.
- Identify priority conservation areas on the Southern Eastern Slopes, expanding the current system of protected areas and ensuring connectivity between areas. A key initiative in this objective is achieving full legal protection of the Castle Special Place as a Wildland Provincial Park.
- Decrease disturbances and linear access in the Southern Eastern Slopes to below grizzly bear and cutthroat trout density thresholds.
- Ensure adaptive management is used to prioritize ecological and social objectives and outcomes on Alberta's Southern Eastern Slopes.
- Conservation and protected areas are well-represented in land use planning in Alberta, ensuring connectivity and the maintenance of natural systems and habitats and protection of headwaters.
- Build constituency of support and stewardship for conservation of Alberta's Southern Eastern Slopes.

B. Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks

- Ensure Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks are managed to prioritize ecological integrity and to provide people with sustainable recreational opportunities.
- Build constituency of support and stewardship for Canada's parks among the public and decision-makers.

C. Grasslands

- Explore opportunities for a coordinated CPAWS National grasslands conservation campaign that would complement on-going work by other organizations.
- Build constituency of support and stewardship for conservation of Southern Alberta's native grasslands.
- Increase grassland protection in Southern Alberta through establishing protected areas and encouraging continued stewardship of native prairie grasslands on private and public lands.