



2025 Annual Report

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society | Southern Alberta

Dedication.

To You, the Stewards of Alberta.



This year's Annual Report is dedicated to each and every one of you — and all of the Albertans, province-wide — who fight for wild spaces and species day after day, year after year.

Whether you're an angler or an author, a biologist or a business owner, a camper or a climatologist, a hiker or a hunter, or simply an Albertan who cares about land, water, and wildlife in our province: Thank you.

We each have unique abilities and resources to dedicate to the stewardship of nature in our province. Your efforts — however, wherever, and whenever they take shape — are vital; and it matters far less how you show up or speak out than that you do.

Whether you called, emailed, or met with your elected representatives, donated, protested, or volunteered, you've made a difference. We know: It doesn't always feel like it. All too often, it seems, both politicians and policy-making serve the interests of large corporations with little to no regard for clean water, sustainable communities, connected habitat, or at-risk species.

But we firmly believe that the longer we stand up and the louder we speak out, the harder we'll be to ignore. We're not asking for too much; in fact, we're asking for little more than what should already be ours: A future for nature, and therefore ourselves, in Alberta.

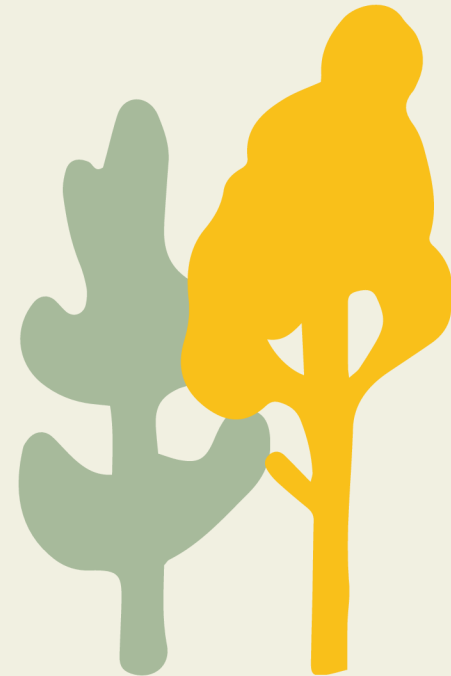
For all that you do to make this possible, you have our gratitude.

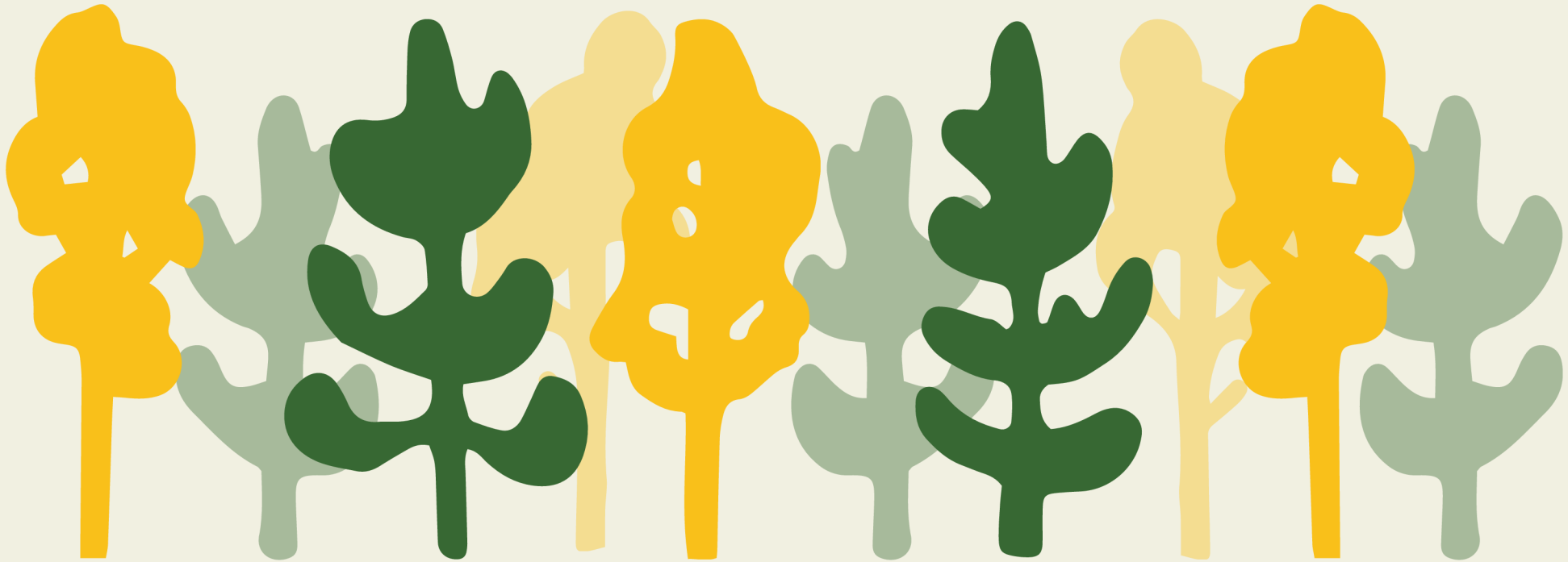


We gratefully acknowledge that we live and work in and on the lands and waters of the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), comprised of the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, and Amskapi Piikani First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; the Îyârhe Nakoda, including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; the Ktunaxa Nation; and the Otipemisiwak Métis Nation of Alberta.

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A Cedar Waxwing bird is perched on a tree branch, facing right. The bird has a reddish-brown crest, a black mask-like stripe through its eyes, and a pale yellowish-buff body. The background is a dense, out-of-focus forest with green leaves and brown branches.

We'll Keep Fighting for Nature.

Dr. Jon Mee | Board Chair

At CPAWS Southern Alberta, we collaborate in everything that we do. We work with community organizations, Indigenous Peoples and First Nations, other environmental advocacy groups, individual Albertans, landowners, and many others.

We sometimes lead the charge, acting as the head of the spear for the conservation community. Other times, we're a quiet catalyst, supporting our collaborators in taking conservation action. We all know — because we've heard from Albertans over and over — that we are the voice of the majority who want to benefit from the ecological, social, cultural, and spiritual value of our public lands and waters.

Yet, frustratingly, preserving and protecting Alberta's public lands often feels like a fight.

Thankfully, and while we much prefer working together to protect nature in Alberta, we're also pretty good in a fight. We're a relatively small organization that punches well above its weight. We know that the measure of a fighter isn't how often they get knocked down, but whether they get back up. Our chapter has been 'in the ring,' so to speak, for over 50 years, and we've taken our blows and gotten back up to achieve conservation wins many times over.

Regardless of whether the blows keep coming — and we know that they will — Albertans can count on us to keep fighting to protect land, water, and wildlife across our region.

We're able to keep advocating for a coal mine free Alberta, we're able to keep pushing for responsible forest management that respects Critical Habitat for our treasured fish and wildlife species, and we're able to keep advocating for nature because we know, dear donors and supporters, that we have you in our corner.

As a volunteer board member, I take immense pride in supporting the work of CPAWS Southern Alberta.

I'm privileged to witness first-hand the incredible level of passion, dedication, and persistence that exists among the staff of our organization.

If you haven't already, I urge you to join me in their corner.

Conservation as Science Fiction.

Katie Morrison | Executive Director

In today's world, the headlines often feel like science fiction — policies that defy ecological logic, environmental degradation unfolding before our very eyes, and decisions that seem to ignore the very future we're trying to protect. But science fiction, especially my personal favourite, *Star Trek*, reminds us that even in the face of existential threats, there is hope. There is action. There is community.

This year, our team and community have boldly gone where few conservation organizations have gone before: Confronting harmful legislation, defending threatened species, protecting headwaters, and building inclusive pathways for education and engagement.

Admittedly, that might not sound all that bold. But, we are constantly compelled, by both necessity and our own desire to push the envelope of what's possible, to come up with new approaches and strategies to maximize our impact. And, as we work towards finding and walking the most effective path, it is important to remember that we sometimes have to backtrack. We have to re-fight battles, like coal mining in the Rockies; but, that's only because, at some point before, we won them. We can do so again.

The Conservation Prime Directive

In *Star Trek*, the Prime Directive is a guiding principle of Starfleet that prohibits its members from interfering with the natural development of alien civilizations.

At CPAWS Southern Alberta, our prime directive (mission) aims to protect not alien civilizations, but the ecological functions of our own earthly public lands and waters, and the communities they support.

This year that meant swiftly responding to the All-Seasons Resort Act, which was passed without public or Indigenous consultation and which threatens parks and protected areas by exempting tourism development from regular environmental review processes. Our campaign generated thousands of letters and sparked important civic dialogue. Though the fierce opposition was ignored and the Act passed, we are now focused on shaping its implementation and advocating for sustainable tourism in Alberta.

We also continue working with a broad coalition of partners, including ranchers, anglers, hikers, recreationalists, and Indigenous Peoples, to challenge Alberta's new coal policy — the Coal Industry Modernization Initiative (CIMI) — as well as the lifting of the coal moratorium and new exploration and mine applications for Grassy Mountain. These government and industry initiatives have reopened the door to destructive exploration and mining across the Eastern Slopes. Our community has, and will continue to, respond with a renewed push for a permanent policy to protect Alberta's Rockies.

On the forest management front, our research confirmed a resident bull trout population in Loomis Creek in the Highwood region of Kananaskis, reaffirming the unacceptable risks posed by logging here.

This issue is deeply concerning, not just for Loomis Creek, but for the many important subwatersheds across the Eastern Slopes, as shown in our report on the loss of native trout Critical Habitat across the southern Eastern Slopes, and further confirmed through our summer field program documenting these alarming issues on the ground.

In Star Trek: The Next Generation's episode "Force of Nature," travelling at warp speed is discovered to be damaging a fragile corridor of space. This resonates deeply with our work, perhaps especially this year. Decisions were made and pushed through at warp speed that have a real impact on sensitive species and ecosystems. In response we continue to advocate for science-based decisions and meaningful habitat protection, engaging with industry, government, and communities to ensure our findings inform policy.

Education as Exploration

The illustrious Mr. Spock once commented on the infinite diversity of creation, noting "... the ways our differences combine, to create meaning and beauty." That spirit — of advancement through diversity, curiosity and courage — is at the heart of our work.

Our education programs are our starships — vehicles for discovery, empowerment, and change. In 2025, we engaged over 5,150 Albertans in 215 conservation education experiences, from classroom sessions to interpretive hikes and professional learning workshops.

Our "We All Belong in Nature" initiative reached nearly 300 participants, fostering diversity and inclusion in the conservation sector.

We also expanded our youth experience. Youth leadership is essential to empower the next generation of environmental leaders, and our assignment, much like Starfleet Academy, is to equip and inspire young Albertans with the skills and knowledge to have real impact.

Our new Youth Conservation Collective (YCC) and the Alberta Grasslands Story course worked towards this goal by connecting students with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, ranchers, and conservation partners, highlighting oft-overlooked voices.

Another key event this year was the co-production and release of the documentary "Dry Horizons" in partnership with Plateau Cattle Company and Alberta Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and directed by Ryan HK. The documentary amplifies the stories of Albertans from different backgrounds and explores threats to Alberta's water systems. Our film was screened across the province, sparking many important conversations about the future of our headwaters.

One of our favourite yearly activities is supporting the Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association (KEPA) in the development and delivery of their educational summit development which blends Traditional Ecological Knowledge with Western science.

Our participation helps us learn how to better incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into our work.

Words, Ideas, Action

As Captain Kirk's son once said, "Good words... that's where ideas begin." And ideas, in turn, lead to action. Our advocacy, education, and engagement efforts are not just responses — they are proactive steps toward a more hopeful and sustainable future. We are shaping policy, building community, and inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards.

To our incredible staff, board, volunteers, members, and community partners — thank you for your dedication and passion. Whether you've written a letter, attended an event, donated, or simply shared our message, you are part of a movement that is making a difference.

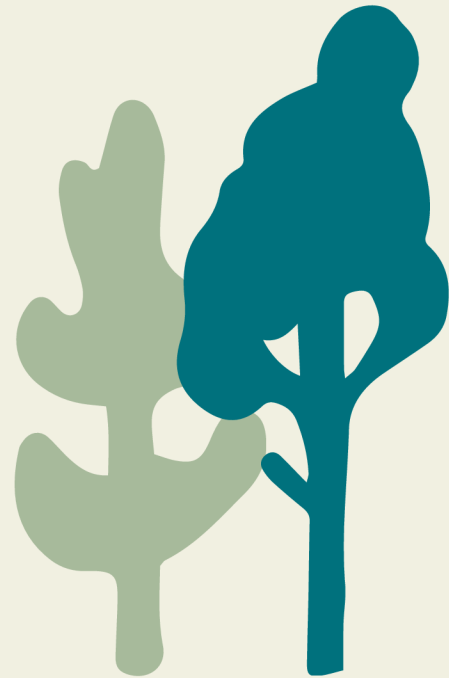
Let's continue to build a diverse, inclusive, and resilient community. Let's continue to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife that define Southern Alberta. And let's continue to show that when we come together, we can shape a future where nature and people thrive — not just in science fiction, but in reality. Because, when it comes to conservation that supports the public interests of Albertans, Spock and Kirk's words ring as true today:

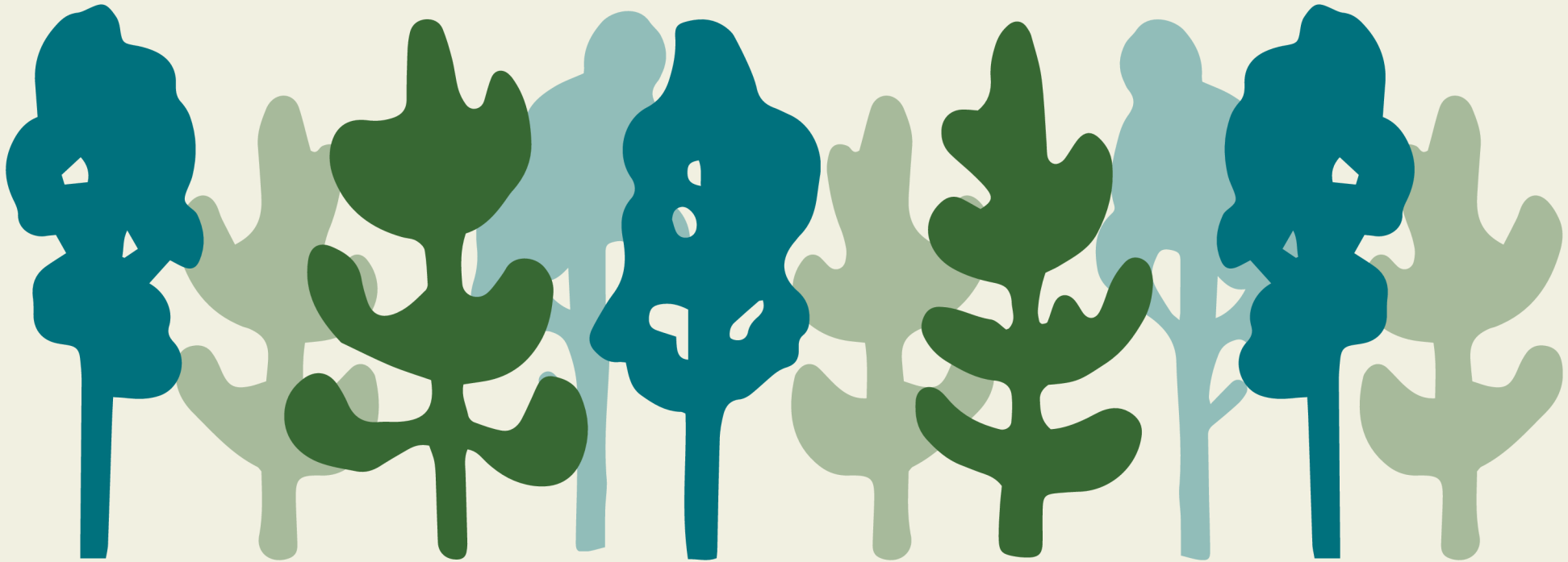
"The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one."



Tales from the Trail.

Advancing Science-Based Conservation in Southern Alberta.





Albertans Care, Full Stop.

Chloe Hahn | Conservation Coordinator

I continue to be inspired by the deep and enduring commitment of Albertans to protecting our province's wild spaces and species.

Time and again, we've stood up for our irreplaceable ecosystems, despite the long shadow cast by harmful industrial activities and short-sighted land-use management.

While 2025 presented more than its fair share of challenges, Albertans' core conservation values shone through, offering a beacon of hope for the power of collective advocacy. Together with our friends at CPAWS Northern Alberta, we commissioned polling on what Albertans want to see when it comes to nature, parks, protected areas, and public lands in our province.

You can see the results of this polling on page 15, but (spoiler alert) it showed that Albertans care. Full stop. They want to see our land, water, and wildlife taken care of.

Unsurprisingly, government-led engagement told a similar story. In its own survey, the Government of Alberta found that 77% of Albertans oppose coal mining in the Eastern Slopes, despite its irresponsible decision to lift the moratorium on coal mining in the Rocky Mountains.

Meanwhile, the unasked-for All-Season Resort Act is still moving forward.

The Act contradicts public input from the Government of Alberta's own Plan for Parks Survey, which demonstrated strong and widespread opposition to large-scale commercial and privatized development, and clear support for expanding protected areas.

While it is disheartening, frustrating even, to see the widening disconnect between the values of Albertans and government decision-making, your consistent support and advocacy throughout 2025 sent a clear message: Change is both wanted and needed, and the pressure is mounting. As the climate and biodiversity loss crises escalate in severity, it's time for government actions to reflect the interests of Albertans.

Over 90 species in Alberta are currently listed under Canada's Species at Risk Act and the Alberta Wildlife Act. Meanwhile, more than half of Albertans have expressed concern over declining wildlife populations. What's more, Albertans are increasingly seeing our shared reliance on landscapes, like the Eastern Slopes of the Rockies, for ecosystem services ranging from clean drinking water to sustainable recreation and our tourism economy.

Consequently, we've been hard at work forming a collaborative vision for a strong home-grown strategy that both protects nature in Alberta and that aligns with the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework.

This would provide a blueprint for the Government of Alberta to address biodiversity loss and climate change. We tested our vision in polling, with more than 80% of Albertans rating their key priorities as:

- Watershed protection,
- Preserving biodiversity,
- Restoring degraded ecosystems,
- Enforcing existing environmental laws, and
- Protecting and expanding Provincial Parks and Protected Areas.

As 2025 draws to a close, I don't wish to understate either the ongoing or the emerging conservation challenges we face. However, I'm still able to look ahead to 2026 with renewed hope of creating and advancing a shared vision that cannot be ignored by elected officials or government decision-makers.

It's also important to remember that we've made progress before in fighting for our environment — whether it was reinstating the 1976 Coal Policy, 'Defending Alberta Parks,' or putting a pause on the Highwood clearcut — and we can do so again. Our poll results and the determined advocacy of our community are proof that Albertans continue to value and take a stand for nature, regardless of the political narrative.

Let this be your reminder: you are not alone. Together, our collective voice has the power to create real change.





Conservation is a Core Value in Alberta.

New Polling Reveals Strong Support for Nature Protection.



While the current Government of Alberta too often frames environmental conservation as a fringe concern, new polling commissioned by us — and our friends at CPAWS Northern Alberta — paints a very different picture.

In fact, protecting our province's land, water, and wildlife is a core value held by nearly all Albertans; it's also one that crosses political lines, demonstrating that while we may feel divided in these troubled times, certain values still bind us together.

Our most recent polling revealed that not only do Albertans care deeply about both enjoying and protecting nature in our province, including our incomparable national and provincial parks, but also firmly support expanding parks and protected areas.

What's more — and while our strong support for conservation may not come as a surprise — the poll also surfaced that the majority of Albertans support environmental protection even when it means risking legal battles with coal companies or passing up on short-term economic gains from industrial development.

Unfortunately, the Government of Alberta's recent decision-making flies in the face of results like this — and the longstanding support for conservation in our province. More than ever, we need to ensure that elected officials and policy-makers aren't just listening to what we value, but actually incorporating those values in their decisions.



85%

Support Alberta committing to Canada's target of protecting 30 percent of its land and water for conservation purposes by 2030.

78%

Support creating new protected areas in Alberta specifically for wildlife.

72%

Of Albertans — and 86% of regular parks users — support setting aside more land in Alberta for provincial parks for recreation and leisure.

57%

Support Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) as a tool for ecosystem conservation. This figure increases to a majority 78% among those who were already familiar with IPCAs.

80%

Are concerned about the future of Alberta's water supply and 69% believe the provincial government should take stronger action to manage our water supply, even if this means restricting some industrial land and water uses.

63%

Believe protections for the Eastern Slopes should be maintained, despite potential legal challenges from coal companies, due to the region's importance for water security, wildlife, and recreation. Only 10% support the Government of Alberta's current choice to go back on protections in the face of legal challenges.

75%

Oppose increased logging in areas critical to threatened species such as caribou and native trout.

Learn more, and see the poll results in full, on our website.



Highwood Field Study in Focus.

Josh Killeen | Conservation Science & Program Manager



We've known for a long time that native trout species like westslope cutthroat and bull trout do not mix well with large-scale logging operations. This year, we've been taking steps to document the scale of impact on these species from forestry and, from there, take our advocacy to the next level.

We've done this in a few different ways.

First, the results of the ecohydrological study we commissioned in the Upper Highwood were released early this year. The study confirmed for the first time that Loomis Creek is occupied by a reproducing resident bull trout population, which is reliant on the habitat in this watershed. It also demonstrated that the level of risk to this population from proposed logging is very high; this risk comes from roads, watercourse crossings, and clearcuts in and around Critical Habitat, and even roads and crossings directly upstream of the most sensitive spawning and rearing habitats.

Unfortunately, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has recently issued a permit allowing critical habitat destruction for the purposes of logging around the Highwood River. This means that West Fraser Cochrane can now carry out the first stage of its logging plan in the Upper Highwood. We continue to advocate for logging plans to be stopped in this area.

We also released work that used Geographic Information Systems analysis to identify locations across the southern East Slopes where logging operations have impacted native trout habitat.

We found large numbers of stream crossings that had caused critical habitat destruction, and none had a Species at Risk permit. We also found hundreds of hectares of riparian critical habitat lost due to insufficient protections on smaller watercourses.

The resulting Critical Habitat Report clearly shows the systemic nature of the issue and the failure to enforce federal protections under the Species at Risk Act.

Finally, this summer we've been doing fieldwork across managed forestry areas. We've been documenting the presence of trout critical habitat, verifying data from our critical habitat report, and assessing forestry crossings and roads for erosion risks.

Results of this work will be released later in the year, but the work is demonstrating again the systemic nature of issues arising from forestry operations that impact imperiled trout species. This kind of data is vital for us to be able to advocate effectively for better protections.

With a proposal to increase allowable logging levels by 32% over the next 10 years in the Crowsnest FMA, it's more important than ever to defend Alberta forests.

This year we've also begun work on a project focusing on improving access to information about forestry plans. This will include an online mapping tool and a place to find information on how to be effectively engaged in forestry consultations and planning.



From the Sheep to the Bow: Bull Trout on the Brink.

Amber Payliss | Guest Contributor, Angler and Photographer

I grew up in the foothills near Millarville and Black Diamond, where the Sheep River carved a path through my childhood. It wound quietly through the farmland behind our acreage, a stretch that felt wild and untouched to me when I was a kid.

I spent countless days fishing there with my dad, learning how to cast, watching the current flow, and learning to respect what swims beneath it. Those were the years I first came to know bull trout: Powerful, elusive, and unforgettable. Now, as I walk that same river with my own son, I am still drawn back for one more encounter with the fish that has always defined this place for me.

Bull trout are one of three native trout species in Alberta. They are a late-maturing, mostly migratory species that depends on cold, clean water and unbroken connectivity between mountain headwaters and larger river systems. Their presence is widely recognized as a measure of watershed health. If bull trout thrive, the entire system is functioning.

The Sheep River provides critical spawning and rearing habitat within the upper Bow River Basin, which is why the stretch from Gorge Creek to Sheep River Falls is permanently closed to fishing. Each year, bull trout travel from the Bow River to reach these tributaries, returning with the urgency of a species that has already overcome so much but cannot withstand every pressure we continue to exert on them.



Even with protections in the Upper Sheep, their future remains uncertain. Climate change is warming water temperatures and reducing flows during late summer, when fish require stable, cool habitat to survive.

Growing downstream communities put increased demand on the river. And while catch-and-release regulations help, bull trout remain vulnerable to stress during migration and spawning. The threats they face are not isolated, and neither is the Sheep River.

The Highwood River, another major tributary within the Bow River Basin, shows just how fragile bull trout habitat can be. As forestry and expansion push further into headwaters, sediment can wash into spawning beds, and flow patterns can shift in ways that reduce cold-water refuge during drought. The Bow River Basin is a network. The Sheep, the Highwood, and countless tributaries work together to sustain bull trout throughout their lifecycle. When we alter any part of that system, fish that rely on long-distance movement, like bull trout, feel the consequences first.

The Sheep River has given me so much: family memories, a grounding sense of place, and now the opportunity to pass that connection on to my son. I want him, and every young person who grows up here, to know the wonder of wild rivers and wild bull trout, not just read about them as a species we lost.

The Sheep remains a stronghold. But strongholds are not safe by default. Protecting bull trout here means protecting the connected watershed that sustains them throughout the Bow River Basin and across Alberta's Eastern Slopes.

We must prioritize habitat integrity, apply caution in headwaters decisions, and speak up when short-term gains threaten long-term resilience.

With care, action, and the continued advocacy of organizations like CPAWS Southern Alberta, we can ensure bull trout remain a living part of these rivers, not a memory of what once was.



Forestry Company West Fraser Asks for 32% Increase in Allowable Cut.

**Unsustainable logging would take place in
our headwaters.**



Less than five years into being granted a Forest Management Agreement for the Crowsnest Pass, West Fraser is seeking an astonishing 32% increase in allowable cut for the region.

The Crowsnest Forest Management Agreement covers a huge swath of land, stretching from the Castle Parks south of the Crowsnest Pass, all the way to the northern boundary of Kananaskis Country, and including the Porcupine Hills.

Albertans, understandably, love this region. It's natural beauty is unmatched and it is rife with recreation opportunities from camping and hiking to fishing and hunting. It's also, without exaggeration, essential for provincial biodiversity and the health of our watersheds.

It's no surprise, then, that the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, which is intended to guide land-use and management in the area, clearly states "Watershed management and headwaters protection is the priority. Forests will be managed as this as the highest priority (including water storage, recharge and release functions)."

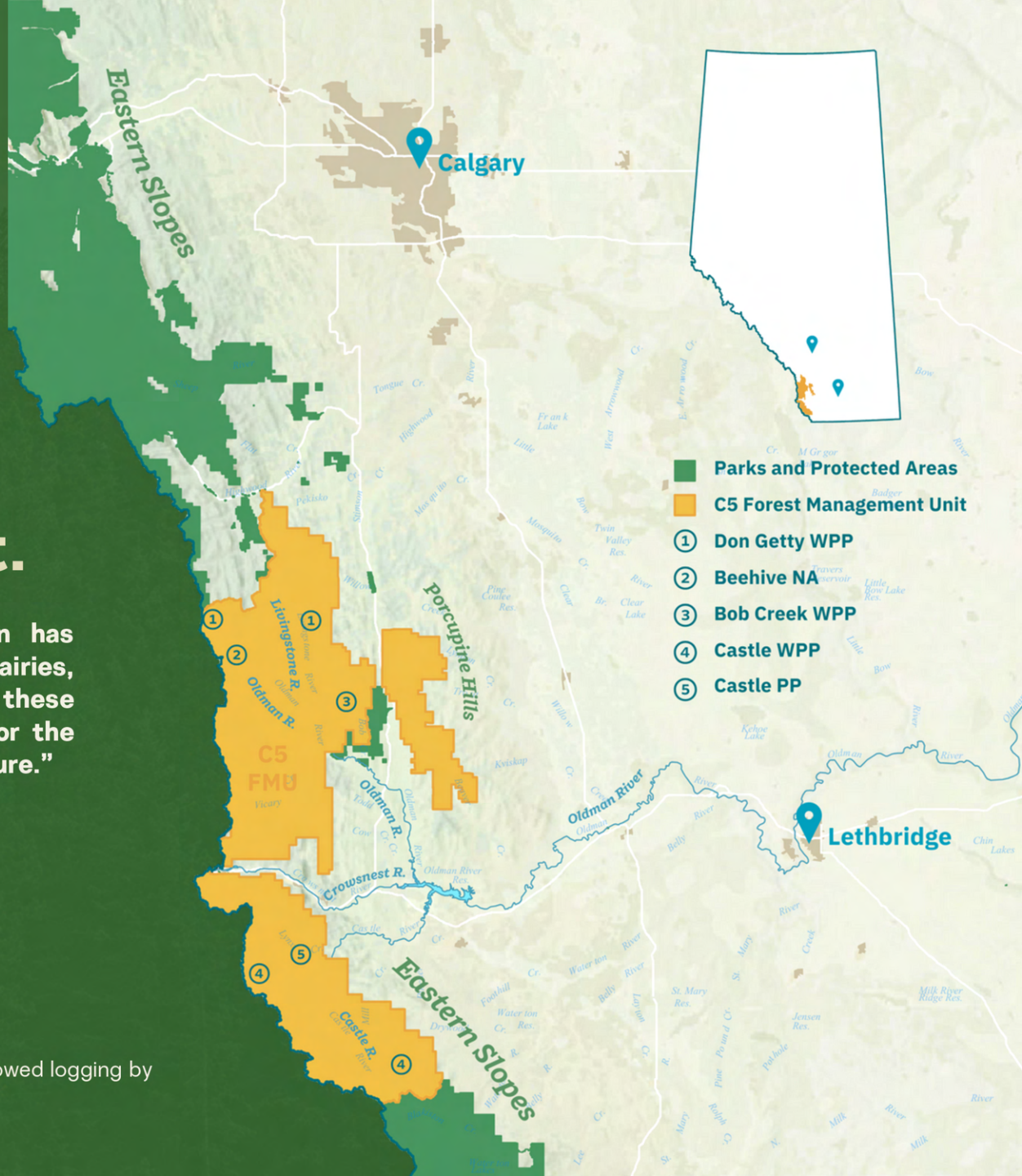
If watershed health is the priority, any changes to cut rates — especially of this scale — must be backed by science and prioritize our headwaters. That, in turn, means completing the long-promised cumulative effects studies to develop ecologically meaningful thresholds, as well as updating watershed assessment processes, prior decisions being made.

The C5 Forest Management Unit.

“What happens in our headwater region has direct downstream impacts, across the prairies, the foothills, and beyond. Looking after these watersheds couldn’t be more important for the health of our forests, communities, and future.”

Josh Killeen
Conservation Science and Program Manager

Send a letter opposing this irresponsible increase in allowed logging by visiting the “Take Action” section of our website.



A Year of Resistance and Resolve.

Katie Morrison | Executive Director

This past year has been one of both heartbreak and hope in our ongoing campaign to protect Alberta's Eastern Slopes from coal mining.

Despite overwhelming and sustained public opposition, in January 2025 the Government of Alberta quietly lifted the moratorium on coal exploration and development — in the middle of hearings on the Grassy Mountain coal exploration application. This decision reopened nearly 188,000 hectares of sensitive landscapes to coal activity, threatening our headwaters, wildlife, and communities.

The termination of the moratorium came hot on the heels of the Government's December 2024 announcement of a Coal Industry Modernization Initiative (CIMI). CIMI not only commits to new coal mines in the Eastern Slopes, but only consults with industry — blatantly disregarding the findings of the 2021 Coal Policy public engagement, in which 70% of Albertans voiced clear opposition to any new coal development.

At CPAWS Southern Alberta, we were outraged — but not deterred. Our team, alongside thousands of Albertans, municipalities, Indigenous communities, ranchers, and conservation partners, has continued to push back against this regressive policy shift. In response, we've doubled down on advocacy, awareness-building, and community mobilization.

We've hosted public events and discussions across the province as part of our Dry Horizons film tour, met with stakeholders and rightsholders, prompted media articles, and amplified the voices of Albertans who cherish the Eastern Slopes, not for their coal, but for their clean water, biodiversity, livelihoods and recreational value.

Our social media channels have been a hub for real-time updates, calls to action, and stories from the frontlines of the campaign. These conversations with Albertans have given us hope and continued to fuel our commitment to ensuring the Eastern Slopes remain free of coal mine exploration and development.

We've also called for immediate reclamation of the damage already done. Since the 1976 Coal Policy was rescinded in 2020, companies have carved hundreds of kilometers of roads and drilled hundreds of sites across the Rockies. These scars remain, with no clear plan for cleanup despite companies receiving millions of dollars in settlements from the Government of Alberta. We continue to demand that coal companies be held accountable and that Alberta taxpayers are not left to foot the bill for remediation.

Looking ahead, our work is far from over. The threat of projects like Grassy Mountain looms large, as the company prepares to submit a new mine application, claiming that they are exempt from any new rules in the upcoming CIMI.

This is despite the fact that CIMI itself has not been passed by government or released to the public; presumably this assumption, then, is based on backroom deals. However, we are adamant that Grassy Mountain must not be exempt and that CIMI must ban all new coal mines in the Eastern Slopes.

The decision by Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) CEO to unilaterally cancel the public hearing for Mine 14 — overriding the ruling of an independent panel of hearing commissioners—has further shaken public confidence in Alberta's regulatory system.

We applaud our CPAWS Northern Alberta colleagues for appealing this decision. We have long been concerned with decisions of the AER and this most recent issue has entrenched our view that we cannot manage the future of this invaluable landscape mine by mine through a broken regulatory system, but need real legislation that bans any new coal exploration or development across the Eastern Slopes. The Eastern Slopes are too important to sacrifice — for our water, wildlife, climate, and future generations.

To everyone who has written letters, attended rallies, shared posts, or spoken out: thank you. Your voice matters. Together, we've already achieved major wins, and together, we'll keep fighting for a coal-free Alberta.

Let's keep the pressure on.



A Special Ceremony at Kainai

Laura Morel | Communications Specialist

Every year, we look forward to the Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association (KEPA) summit, and this year's theme — Ksaahkomma ki Sokinaapi (Environment and Health) — felt especially relevant to today's frenetic pace. Conservation work is often a marathon, not a sprint. It asks for long-term commitment, collaboration, and a steady renewal of energy and focus over time.

The theme of the summit reminded us how closely our well-being is tied to that of the land, and how important it is to stay grounded and connected, to the work and to each other.

We were grateful to attend as participants and as volunteers, and to spend time learning from the stories, teachings, and experiences shared by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, featured speakers, youth, and fellow attendees. KEPA continues to be a space rooted in a deep sense of community and a generosity of knowledge, where the land is honoured as a source of strength and wisdom, and one to be shared and nurtured by the collective.

A few of the many highlights from this year's summit included:

- Youth panels featuring students from the Tatsikiisaapo'p Middle School, Kana High School, and Blackfeet Community College,
- Learning how to throw an atlatl,
- Meeting guests from Ecuador, Guatemala, and Mexico, and
- Screening our film *Dry Horizons: Stewarding a Future for Water in Southern Alberta*.

During the event, our Executive Director, Katie Morrison, also had the profound experience of being honoured with a Blackfoot naming ceremony.

Elder Ninna Piksii (Mike Bruised Head) led the ceremony with heartfelt prayers and songs, gifting four stories, and the Niitsítapi name of Ikkinaa'powahkaa (or Gentle Walker) for Katie. The name arose after Ninna Piksii dreamed a vision of a bear walking, strong and powerful — one who will fight if made mad, but who mostly walks gently through the woods, placing each step with care.

Reflecting on the honour, Katie said, "This ceremony is not only a personal honour, but also a recognition of my commitment to the lands and waters of Treaty 7 and beyond, and to the Niitsítapi peoples who have cared for these places since time immemorial. I'll do my best to honour and wear this name with care, and to continue walking gently but with purpose — strengthening our connections to people and place, both individually and as an organization."

Thank you to the Kainai Ecosystem Protection Association for welcoming us so warmly. We're grateful to be part of this work and this community.

Tales from the Trail.

Our Award-Winning Education and Engagement Experiences Soared to New Heights This Year.





Youth Conservation Collective

Chris Villacorta-Lopez | YCC Program Coordinator

Tackling paradigm-shifting environmental challenges like the biodiversity crisis or climate change, or even looking for job opportunities within the conservation sector, can be daunting tasks for today's youth. So, we were inspired to create the Youth Conservation Collective (YCC), which offers Albertans in grades 10-12 a launch pad for their conservation journey with skill building, leadership training, and applied project work.

We were so excited to kick-off the program with our inaugural cohort this summer and invited 23 people, including 11 students and 12 mentors, to a boot-camp in Kananaskis.

During that time, they learned more about CPAWS Southern Alberta, our campaigns and how to get involved, and began to create a community of eco-minded individuals who care deeply about the future of Alberta's lands, water, and wildlife.

"We loved the energy that formed between the students and their mentors and the clever, creative group names the cohorts came up with, including the Greeners, Echological, the Honeybees, and Aquaducts," says Chloe Hahn, our Conservation Coordinator.

As the boot camp progressed, each cohort began to hone in on a specific conservation issue they want to take action on. We were heartened to hear the participants note that the presence of experienced, knowledgeable mentors left them feeling "more confident," giving them the "support to make [their] ideas a reality."

In September, the Youth Conservation Collective then attended their first field trip, heading to Banff National Park. We spent the whole day exploring the town's nature paths, the museum, meeting with Parks Canada and elected officials.

The next field trip will offer participants the opportunity to collaborate with Parks Canada on a creek restoration project, offering invaluable hands-on experience in field work.

As our inaugural cohort progresses through the YCC program, we're looking forward to learning and growing alongside them — it's about more than just getting these passionate young Albertans kickstarted on their conservation journey (and, quite possibly, careers!) but also continuing to expand and evolve our own community, as we look to inspire the environmental leaders of tomorrow.

Already, we're watching these bright-eyed and bushy-tailed highschoolers turn from focusing on conservation challenges to imagining possible solutions and actions. "We can't wait to see where they go and where we go together," concludes Chris Villacarta-Lopez, the YCC Program Coordinator.



Partner Testimonials

Advancing our bioDIVERSITY Commitments

Multicultural Trail Network

Marisa Jiménez
Founder and President

"CPAWS Southern Alberta has been Multicultural Trail Network's longest and most active partnership thanks to our shared values and a mutual respect for each other's work and expertise.

As a diverse team, we receive a lot of requests that feel like they're only trying to check off a diversity box — with CPAWS, we actually feel recognized for what we're doing — and we've received immense help to further our mission.

We are so grateful to work alongside each other and for the opportunities for growth and learning that our partnership has, and we know will continue, to offer."



Skipping Stone

Lindsay Peace

Executive Director and Founder

"Recent research shows that over 80% of trans and gender diverse individuals stop all forms of physical activity after coming out due to invalidation, fear, and stigma. It's essential that we create avenues for our communities to be able to reengage with their bodies.

As such, we are unbelievably excited about our partnership with CPAWS Southern Alberta, where trans and gender diverse folks are explicitly welcome to enjoy nature in a safe and affirming way."



Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre

Aaron Worrall Life Skills Coach

"CPAWS is doing their best to make nature accessible to everyone in Canada! This includes people with disabilities. CPAWS is helping give them the same opportunities as anyone else.

This is what inclusion is all about, and this is why I have been delighted with the DDRC's partnership with CPAWS. A perfect example is that a few clients said they want to try nature walks in Nose Hill Park. CPAWS agreed without hesitation.

Whether it's workshops or walks, CPAWS is helping clients of the DDRC access the same joy of nature that every citizen of Canada deserves to experience."



Alberta's Grassland Stories

Our University of Calgary Course | Summer 2025



The Storied Past, Present, and Future of An Endangered Biome.

Jaclyn Angotti | Education Director

Dr. Sabrina Perić | University of Calgary



As you undoubtedly know, we adore Alberta's iconic forests and mountains — and the biodiversity found therein — but we also have an enormous place in our heart for one of the province's most underrated ecosystems: The grasslands.

Grasslands store carbon, preserve soil nutrients, filter freshwater, and are rich in both natural and cultural heritage. (In fact, the substantial carbon stocks of Alberta's grasslands are potentially 150% greater than those of forests.)

Researchers, Indigenous Peoples, and conservation advocates have all emphasized the need for grasslands protection in the face of biodiversity loss and our changing climate. Unfortunately, only a little more than 1% of Alberta's grasslands are protected, despite the fact that they're home to 80% of the province's at-risk species.

As such, we were beyond excited to partner with the University of Calgary on a new field-based anthropology course entitled "Alberta Grassland Stories."

Alongside Dr. Sabrina Perić and 10 bright-eyed students, we travelled to Southern Alberta, learning about the grasslands from those who live there, including Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, ranchers, scientists, conservationists, and climate leaders — all of whom generously shared their extensive knowledge of our invaluable, irreplaceable grasslands.

The immersive five-day course was offered in conjunction with the University of Calgary's Department of Anthropology and Archaeology and the Energy Stories Lab, and it was jam-packed with memorable experiences for instructors and students alike.

We participated in an opening learning circle at Náápi Otsíthaatan (Oldman River) with Ninna Piksii (Chief Bird, Dr. Mike Bruised Head). Ninna Piksii shared stories about the importance of water, the impacts of the Oldman Dam, Indigenous resistance and resilience, and the imperative of taking action for truth and reconciliation.

In response, student Aidan Hulse said, "I really enjoyed talking to all the Indigenous Elders out on the land and gaining a raw, unfiltered experience of grasslands conservation."

We were also fortunate to spend a day at Buffalo Rock Tipi Camp with Piikani youth, playing Niitsítapi (Blackfoot) hand games led by Jason Plain Eagle, talking a walk guided by Elder Harley Bastien, owner and operator of Buffalo Rock Tipi Camp, and sharing food together, including bison from their last harvest.

We learned that the Piikani Nation Secondary School has launched a new sustainability certificate and Brett Weighill, Senior Vice Principal, gave us a tour of the School's greenhouses, which grow tobacco and sweetgrass for all of the high school's ceremonial needs, as well as an incredible new aquaponics facility.



A special visit for many of the students was with Api'soomaahka (Running Coyote, William Singer III) at Naapi's Garden and Katoyiss Seed Bank on Kainai Nation.

We learned about the use and life of many native prairie plants, and Api'soomaahka's efforts to revitalize areas that had previously been cultivated.

Student Ani Mitsunaga said about the experience at Naapi's Garden, "To walk around the land and actively see how Blackfoot culture is connected to the land, and how much knowledge is stored in the grasslands was surreal. Suddenly, these empty plains were filled with stories and food and medicine."

On our last day, we explored the Waldron Ranch with Whitely Macaulay and Cody Irving from the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Kim Wachtler from Burke Creek Ranch. We learned about how prairie grasses co-evolved with bison, and the importance of grazing for conservation.

Through this impactful field-based learning experience, we are proud to have raised awareness about the critical role grasslands play in carbon sequestration and combating the impacts of climate change; providing young Albertans with an opportunity to learn about the importance of grasslands directly from the people who live and work on the grasslands; and providing participants with the skills and equipment to create their own digital stories.

In reflecting on the experience, students told us that they most appreciated learning about the multiple ways of knowing that people engage with grasslands: Indigenous, local, and scientific.

One of the participants, Kal Denby, noted: "As an Indigenous student, it means a lot to me that the course was largely centered on connecting University of Calgary students with Treaty 7 communities. We were physically on the land, learning about the land — we got to see, speak, and interact with the land. This way of learning was way more effective to me than any slide show presentation. It was a wonderful class that I am grateful to have experienced."

We were so inspired by the students and by all the participants that we hope to offer this course in the future, increasing the number of opportunities for Albertans to engage with the grasslands, our climate future, and with each other.



“Grasslands are not only my personal favourite (yes, we play favourites sometimes), they're home to a wealth of social, cultural, and ecological knowledge and practices, including those of the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded them since time immemorial, and into the present.

Now, the Indigenous Peoples of Treaty 7 do so alongside agriculturalists, anglers, ranchers, hunters, and other conservationists. It was a privilege to experience this ecosystem anew through the eyes of our students, and we hope to be able to offer this program again.”

Jaclyn Angotti
Education Director

80%

Of Alberta's at-risk species call the grasslands home. These include the burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, greater sage grouse, swift fox, pronghorn, American badger, Western small-footed bat, Northern leopard frog, prairie rattlesnake, and numerous other plant and animal species.

1%

Of our province's grasslands are protected, which is far too little. The grasslands face tremendous pressure from sprawl and urban and industrial development, the conversion of native prairie grassland into cropland, resource extraction, and other associated infrastructure such as roads, temporary buildings, and wellsites.

80%

Of native prairie grassland has been replaced by other land uses, in large part as a result of the threats listed above.





Steward Nature in Alberta Alongside Us.

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Volunteer.

Join our enthusiastic volunteer program and become part of a community of Albertans caring for our land, water, and wildlife.

Subscribe.

Subscribe to our newsletter at cpaws-southernalberta.org/subscribe and follow us on social media (our handle is @cpawssab).

Take action.

We have so many resources, including at cpaws-southernalberta.org/take-action, to help you learn how to advocate for nature in Alberta.

Donate.

You can make a contribution any time, of any amount, at cpaws-southernalberta.org/donate.



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