

OUTDOOR PURSUITS



with Rob Miskosky

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing? The End, or the Beginning...

Over the last three issues of *Alberta Outdoorsmen* I have chosen to look at an environmental group active within this province that stemmed from U.S. funding and suspect leadership.

The timing of my treatise was chosen because Alberta's Land-use Framework is in its initial planning stages and many of Alberta's environmentalists are trying hard to push their agenda on the process.

A push to have Willmore Wilderness Park given World Heritage status without

consultation and against the wishes of those who live and work in this region, as well as a proposed Rock Lake Provincial Park expansion, also gave energy to my pen.

My hope was to at least bring some attention to the fact that not all these groups have legitimate purpose and in fact many have grand designs that not only fail in reason, but also border on the edge of lunacy.

And it appears as though I may have ruffled a few feathers along the way, especially those of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y), the main subject of my treatise.

In a letter from Rob Buffer, Executive Director of Y2Y (see page 12 for the published letter) I am told, "your



- photo Duane Radford

The reclamation of a mining site provides habitat for sheep, deer, elk and grizzly bears.

inflammatory and irresponsible writings divide and weaken our common agenda of conserving wildlife" and "the vast majority of our work is directed toward finding better ways for people and wildlife to co-exist, so that both can thrive in this landscape for centuries to come."

I am quite positive

that Mr. Buffer's intentions aren't sinister, but I can't help but wonder if those directing this organization—namely The Wildlands Project—have been completely honest with those they direct.

And I also have to wonder how Mr. Buffer can buy into the entire scheme, in fact going as far as defending a man such as a Dave Foreman.

While it may appear as though I have been a little harsh regarding Y2Y, their agenda must be questioned. If environmental groups are given the right-of-way to proceed without inspection, our ability to work and play in many areas of this province may become limited at best.

Let's not forget the goal of The Wildlands Project—supported by Y2Y—is to create vast cores of wilderness areas surrounded by protected buffer zones and connected by wildlife corridors stretching across the continent, consuming millions of square kilometres of public and private lands.

Within this targeted zone will come land-use restrictions that will impact everybody, including private property owners who fall within this suggested protected area.

"...allowing environmentalists to be leaders in the decision-making process that impacts society as a whole must be re-examined."

Relatively unknown to the general public, this is the concept of "rewilding", where a major portion of North America is restored to its "original" state—the state before man came along and ruined everything. And this is the ultimate goal of groups like The Wildlands Project and Y2Y.

According to Michael Soulé, chairman of The Wildlands Project, "...to achieve ecologically sustainable activities in connectivity zones and in all those 'compatible use' yellow-green blotches on the maps in our vision plans..." they must "...create real partnerships with those who mistrust us."

When scrutinized it becomes quite clear that in order to succeed, these groups must become central players in everything from the development and expansion of provincial, national and wildland parks to the decision-making processes for what may or may not be allowed within those boundaries.

And they long ago recognized the need for strategic alliances, infiltrating government departments, namely Parks Canada, to the point that "green ideology" more than sound science justifies the course in which land-use management decisions are made.

And they do so without the consultation of those who may be affected by their actions.

Few, if any of Alberta's environmental groups active along Alberta's eastern slopes have ever approached or consulted with the many stakeholders in the region.

In an email conversation with Basil Leonard, President of the Willmore Wilderness Foundation (WWF), I was advised that groups such as the Grande Cache Métis Local, also known as the Mountain Métis, nor the WWF have ever been approached by Y2Y.

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"The Mountain Métis and the Willmore Wilderness Foundation have vast knowledge of the biodiversity of the eastern slopes and have built databases of information on their homeland. They are intimately connected with the flora and fauna of their region.

"It defies logic that Y2Y is trying to influence the policies of the eastern slopes when they have no concept of the social structure or the rich cultural tapestry of this region," said Leonard.

And in most cases when environmentalists act, the burden soon falls on other conservation opportunities, including the budgets of wildlife agencies, businesses and the taxpayer.

Environmentalists have agreed that the grizzly bear should be used as the number one critter for Cumulative Effects Models or CEMs. They also contend that no industrial activity should ever take place within areas where grizzly bears habituate.

But what if industrial activity has little or no impact on grizzly bear populations or movement patterns?

What if clear-cut logging with later reforestation or the reclamation of mining surface leases actually improves grizzly bear populations much in the same way it does deer or elk populations?

Last issue I mentioned the Cheviot Mine fiasco brought about by environmental groups vehemently opposed to the start up of the mine, costing Cardinal River Coals millions of dollars in legal costs. Environmentalists suggested the mine would seriously harm grizzly bear habitat bringing further harm to the great bear and as such the mine should not be commissioned.

A recent thesis completed by Marc Daniel Symbaluk and accepted by the chairman of Alberta's grizzly bear recovery team, Gord Stenhouse, proves that mining activity does *not* impact grizzly bear habitat or the bear itself and that all previous assumptions made by the very environmentalists so opposed to the Cheviot Mine were not only inaccurate, but in most cases were completely wrong!

Some suggest the costs brought about by this single environmental crusade were in excess of \$80 million dollars.

It is therefore my contention that allowing environmentalists to be leaders in the decision-making process that impacts society as a whole must be re-examined.

Their ideologies have to be poked, prodded and inspected until there is satisfaction that what is being presented is being presented on the basis of true science, not science based on flawed U.S. models or on highly-financed propaganda machines that prey on emotions.

To allow otherwise is a slap in the face to the entire conservation movement and an insult to groups such as the Willmore Wilderness Foundation and the Mountain Métis. ■

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