

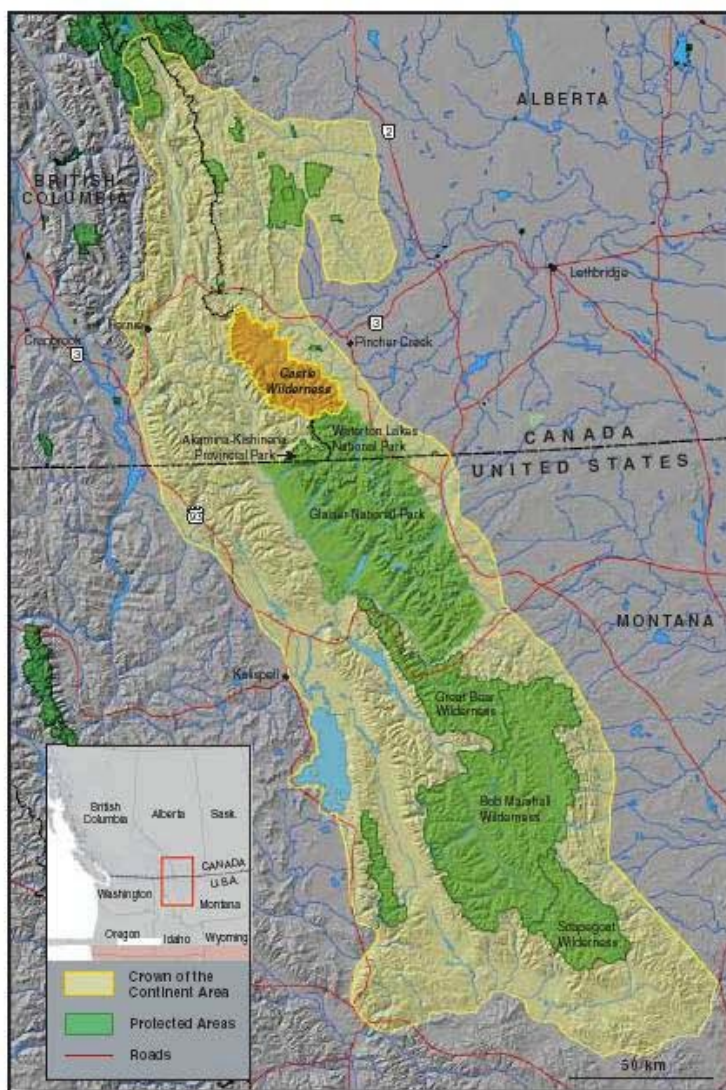
The Castle Wilderness: A Missing Link

Located in southwestern Alberta on public land, directly north of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, the Castle Wilderness is an area of 1040 km² (401 mi²). It is an area of spectacular beauty, and outstanding ecological importance. The Castle has been found to support among the richest mix of biodiversity in Alberta. It lies on the northern edge of the transboundary Crown of the Continent ecosystem, acting as a connecting bridgehead for wildlife migrating between this region and the Central Rockies (Banff-Kananaskis) ecosystem to the north.

Lying in one of the “pinch points” of the Rocky Mountains, the Castle plays a critical linking role in the overall Yellowstone to Yukon ecosystem complex, covering the land from Waterton in the South to the Crowsnest pass in the North. Dr. Chris Servheen, director of the US Interagency Grizzly Bear Recovery Team, has stated flatly that if the Crowsnest Pass is lost to conservation, grizzly bears will be lost to the United States. It would also mean the loss of the Yellowstone to Yukon vision.

Park protection for the Castle Wilderness? It’s in Shell Canada’s hands.

Although the entire Castle Wilderness is public land and two major public hearings by provincial agencies have each previously recommended its legal protection, a park has not come about. This is largely due to the sub-surface petroleum leases held by Shell Canada, including existing roads and wells located in the ecologically unique Front Range canyons of the Castle. Shell has the opportunity to be a catalyst for establishment of the entire Castle as a Wildland Provincial Park. **Conservation groups from Alberta, Canada and the US are urging Shell to drop its interest in drilling and prove its environmental concerns by helping protect the Castle Wilderness.**



The Shell-Waterton Gas Field, discovered in 1954 and extending into the Castle Wilderness, made Shell Canada. Now Shell has the opportunity to give back to the region by being the catalyst of an internationally significant park – the Castle. Its protection would restore a major piece missing from the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem centered around Waterton and

Glacier National Parks. Indeed, much of the Castle was once a part of Waterton Lakes National Park. Its removal cut the national park in half.

Organizations including the Sierra Club and the locally based Castle~Crown Wilderness Coalition have stepped up their campaign for the Castle's preservation, insisting that no new surface disturbances such as roads and drilling occur in the proposed park and that the area be legally protected as a Wildland Provincial Park. Other significant wilderness areas in similar situations have been protected in Alberta, once the companies holding petroleum leases there actively pursued park establishment. Examples include Husky Oil and the establishment of the Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve, Amoco (now BP Energy) and the Wildland Provincial Park in the Whaleback area of southern Alberta, and the Hay-Zama Wildland Provincial Park in northwest Alberta which involved a set of petroleum companies. Shell can lead in the Castle Wilderness by working toward the establishment of a Wildland Provincial Park.

<u>Castle Wilderness Ecological Facts</u>	<u>Castle Wilderness Historical Facts</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waterton-Castle area has the highest levels of biodiversity in Alberta. - Over half of Alberta's 1600 plants can be found in the Castle, including 160 provincially rare and 38 nationally rare plants. - Castle is home to all of Alberta's large carnivores and most of Alberta's native ungulates. - 23 headwater streams in the Castle are a major source of southern Alberta's water. - Important transboundary movement corridor for animals. - Parks Canada has identified the Castle as having an unusual diversity of butterflies, including species found nowhere else in Canada - Castle vital to the ecological integrity of Waterton. - Castle contains 5 distinct eco-regions: alpine, sub-alpine, montane, foothills fescue grasslands and foothills parkland. These last three are underrepresented in Alberta's system of protected areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1921: The Castle is removed from Waterton Lakes National Park. -1968: Local residents and the Pincher Creek Fish and Game Association request protection for the Castle. -1974: The provincial department of Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife recommends that the Castle be legislated as a provincial park. -1993: Alberta's Natural Resource Conservation Board recommends that the Castle be protected. -1998 Parks Canada study finds ecological health of Waterton threatened and cities activities on adjacent lands as important reason. -2000: The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board acknowledged in its decision 2000-17 that biological thresholds for some key species in the Castle have likely been surpassed. -2000: The North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation identifies the Castle as one of fourteen areas in North America that are the most biologically significant and threatened.

For More Information Contact:

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