

# Protecting Alberta's Castle Watershed

## *A Case Study in Conservation Success*



*After 40 years of pressure from conservation groups, Alberta's government announced in September 2015 the creation of a new Provincial Park and expansion of the Wildland Park in the region. In total, that's more than **250,000 ac (100,000 ha)** of protected land—an area double the size of Waterton Lakes National Park!*

### **Key Facts about the Castle**

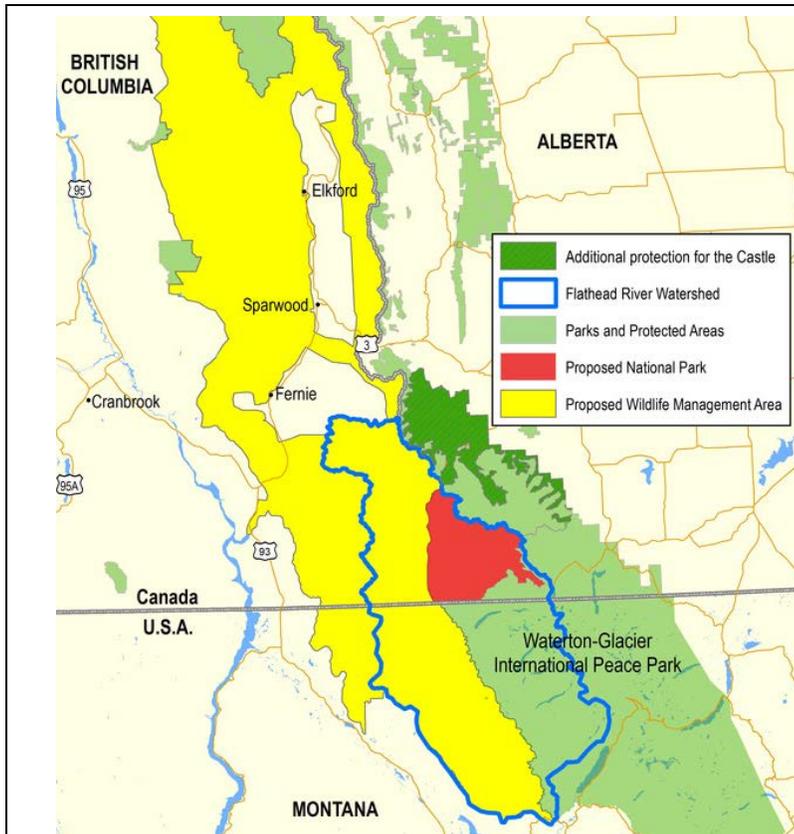
- Comprises 30% of the water in Southern Alberta's Oldman River basin.
- Features the full suite of aquatic ecosystems: rivers, lakes, wetlands and groundwater systems.
- Sacred to the area's First Peoples: Nitsitapii, Piikani (Peigan), Siksika, Kainaiwa (Blood), Blackfeet, Nakoda (Stoney) and K'tunaxa First Nations.
- Home to over 120 provincially rare plant species and 59 species of mammals.
- Offers extensive recreational opportunities: hiking, horseback riding and camping.
- Provides critical wildlife corridors that allow the movement of large animals and keep wildlife populations connected to each other.

**Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative**

1-800-966-7920 | [info@y2y.net](mailto:info@y2y.net)

[www.y2y.net](http://www.y2y.net)

## The Castle in Context



Map courtesy of Flathead Wild.

Alberta's Castle Watershed (dark green) provides a critical link for wildlife moving between the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, B.C.'s Flathead Valley and Alberta's Rocky Mountains.

It offers core habitat for wide-ranging species such as wolverines and grizzly bears, rare pure strains of cutthroat trout, and is home to other endangered species such as limber and whitebark pine.

The Castle is an important part of the larger, transboundary **Crown of the Continent Ecosystem**, which encompasses all of the protected areas in the map, and connects species on both sides of the border.

## A Brief History of the Campaign

- **1968:** Local residents request legislated protection for the Castle.
- **1977:** Provincial planners identify the Castle as having considerable park potential.
- **1993:** Alberta's Natural Resource Conservation Board calls for protecting the area.
- **1998:** Parks Canada study finds ecological health of Waterton Lakes Nat'l Park threatened; cites activities on adjacent lands, including the Castle, an important reason for protection.
- **2009:** Citizen-based working group submits consensus proposal recommending Castle Special Place be legislated as a combination Wildland and Provincial Park.
- **2013:** Albertans speak up for the Castle as government undertakes the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), a planning framework for South Saskatchewan watershed.
- **2014:** The final SSRP approved by Cabinet on July 23; comes into effect on Sept.1; conservation groups argued it does not go far enough by protecting only 50% of the Castle.
- **2015:** Alberta's fledgling NPD government follows through on a campaign promise and announces *a new Provincial Park in the heart of the Castle, plus expansion of a Wildland Park—a total of more than 250,000 ac. (100,000 ha.) of protected land in the region!*
- **2015:** Although conservation groups were thrilled with the new protections, they are disappointed that off-road vehicles will still be allowed in the Provincial Park, harming sensitive landscapes and setting a dangerous precedent for other parks across Alberta.