

**Media Release**

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***Complex Land-Use Planning Lends Itself to One Simple Solution***

Southern Alberta needs more protected areas in Alberta if it is going to meet the economic, environmental, and social objectives as defined in the Land Use Framework. That's the Simple Solution promoted by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – Southern Alberta (CPAWS SA) chapter. CPAWS SA has just released a comprehensive report: *Planning Connections: Recommended Environmental Objectives for the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan*. The report is accompanied by an interactive web-based map detailing Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) and wildlife movement data on a regional scale.

“We recognize that the South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council [RAC] has its work cut out for it,” says Sarah Elmeligi, Senior Conservation Planner for CPAWS SA. “We wanted to help its deliberations by creating a report that clearly sets out a suite of environmental objectives and solutions for the region,” she adds.

The *Planning Connections* report explores regional and landscape issues and makes recommendations for addressing them. Issues include cumulative effects management, climate change, biodiversity, wildlife corridors, ecological goods and services, and the role of Parks and Protected Areas. The report also provides recommendations for addressing road densities, grizzly bear populations, and increased ecological health in several focus areas (e.g., the Castle Special Place and the Milk River Ridge).

CPAWS asserts that the ecological health of the South Saskatchewan Region will be enhanced only through a dramatic increase in the number of Protected Areas and connections between them.

“Having more protected areas will not only help address the impacts associated with cumulative effects, but will also provide wildlife with places of refuge in light of the changing climate,” says Elmeligi. “Such places will also provide Albertans with increased recreational opportunities, and help to retain ecological goods and services, such as carbon storage and water filtration, which will save Albertans millions of dollars in the near future,” she adds.

With the new conservation tools contained in the *Alberta Land and Stewardship Act*, protection doesn't necessarily mean creating a park. Several tools, such as conservation off-sets, easements, and directives can be used to protect Alberta's landscapes. CPAWS-SA believes, however, that traditional parks are still the most valuable tool to conserve large tracts of land and are required in this region.

“These land use problems are complex, but the solution doesn't have to be,” says Elmeligi, “Increasing the amount of protected lands will contribute to the Alberta economy, help enhance regional biodiversity, ensure Southern Alberta is poised to adapt to a changing climate, and enhance the quality of life for all Albertans,” she adds.

The South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Committee was created by the province to help implement the Land Use Framework, after public consultations revealed that a vast majority of Albertans believe that land management in the province is too heavily weighted in favour of industrial development.

## **Background Information:**

A link to the report, executive summary and associated interactive map can be found at:  
[www.cpaws-southernalberta.org](http://www.cpaws-southernalberta.org).

A link to a summary table of the *Planning Connections* report can be found at:  
[http://www.cpaws-southernalberta.org/campaigns\\_legislation/pics/PC\\_TABLE\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.cpaws-southernalberta.org/campaigns_legislation/pics/PC_TABLE_FINAL.pdf)

The table summarizes:

- land use issues in Alberta
- CPAWS Southern Alberta's recommended solutions
- how these solutions fit into the Government Terms of Reference
- how these solutions fit with the province of Alberta's policies