

Currents

Growing Glacier - Waterton Peace Park

*Efforts began in 2000 to expand the Peace Park into B.C.
A decade and a half later... Will we get there?*

IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD TO A NEW PARK IN THE FLATHEAD



The idea to expand Waterton Lake National Park is as old as the park itself. Waterton's first superintendent, "Kootenay" Brown, advocated for enlarging the park based on public support and his appreciation for the need - even then - for a refuge for wildlife whose populations had been devastated by the expansion of European culture across the continent. Kootenay Brown said, *"It seems to be advisable to greatly enlarge this park [into the BC Flathead]. Many people here desire it. It might be well to have a preserve and breeding ground in conjunction with the United States Glacier Park. I am sure this step would be much appreciated by all sportsmen and nature lovers."*

The needs of wildlife have improved, in some respects, since the late 1800's when(Cont. next page...)

Fig. 1: Map of the proposed park expansion and Wildlife Management Area in SE B.C.



Bulltrout in the Flathead River. This specie's survival depends on cold, clear, clean water. Timber harvesting in the Canadian Flathead River watershed now poses a serious risk to this species because of sedimentation released by logging operations. (Photo: Joel Sartre (NGS_Stock with Wade Fredenberg)

conservation planning began to take hold in the Canadian and American cultures. Yet, despite the establishment of Glacier in 1910 and other habitat protection measures, we all understand that Mankind's pressure on Nature remains relentless. The need for landscape-scale conservation designation is critically urgent today.

In 2000, the *Flathead Wild* campaign kicked off a 21st Century effort to complete Brown's vision. Flathead Wild's vision includes doubling the size of Waterton *and* establishing a Wildlife Management Area between the border and Banff National Park in Alberta, as well as *up to three new provincial wilderness areas* in the same geography. (See map above.)

Completing this land conservation initiative will maintain habitat connectivity over one of the most vulnerable zones in the Rocky Mountains, according the *Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative*. *Research* has shown that wildlife movement is most restricted

The international border between Glacier National Park and British Columbia, Canada. Animals are provided a refuge from hunting on the left side of the picture, while hunting is allowed on the right. Establishing a new national park in the B.C. Flathead River Valley would help establish the only sanctuary in all of southeast B.C. (Photo: JustinBlack_iLCP)

along the Canadian Highway 3 corridor across the Rockies. Five (and more proposed) world-class, mountain-top removal coal mines, Highway 3, and the Canadian-Pacific Railroad corridor bi-sect this region. In addition, aggressive logging practices in both Alberta and British Columbia, and extensive backcountry recreation further pressures wildlife populations.

The proposed expansion of Waterton would cover about 100,000 acres (40,400 hectares) and constitute an addition to the Canadian National Park System. Parks Canada would manage the new park as a wilderness as defined in the Canadian National Parks Act. As a national park, hunting would not be permitted, thus fulfilling Kootenay Brown's vision of a "breeding ground" for wildlife.

The Wildlife Management Area fills in everything else between the border and Banff, and would put the needs of wildlife on the same level as other resource considerations, like timber harvest and mining. In this way, core roadless areas and movement corridors would be identified and protected, and resource extraction activities would deliberately accommodate wildlife needs.

It's been 15 years since Flathead Wild began the current campaign to accomplish these key goals. One might ask, "Where's the beef (i.e new park)?"

It's coming! Local support in the Southeast Kootenays (Fernie and Sparwood, B.C. areas) continues to grow. Local decision makers are also moving towards acceptance of the new park and WMA. In addition, the *Ktanaxa* First Nation holds ancestral claim to the lands in the region, and their rights will play a large role in the conservation success of this vital region for wildlife and human culture.

Flathead Wild continues to build on its 2011 and 2014 successes when B.C. and then Montana and the U.S. (respectively) banned mining and energy development in the watershed. We're closing the gap on our remaining goals. *Please stick with us!*

