

# SAVE LASCA...

an area of magnificent  
ancient--old growth--  
forest in the heart of  
the Southern Columbia  
Mountains of B.C.

*Citizens disgruntled by the 'public process' involved with the decision to build a road into Lasca Creek, erected a tipi in May as a symbol of their unity and discontent.*

# ACT NOW AND HELP SAVE LASCA CREEK

In southeastern British Columbia, lies an isthmus of land, bounded on two sides by the clear mountain waters of Kootenay Lake and on the other by a modern highway. Known to the First Peoples of the area as *the Land of the Wolverine*, the B.C. Ministry of the Environment define it as part of the Southern Columbia Mountains Landscape Unit. Within this "Unit" local conservationists have identified this still pristine West Arm Wilderness area, with Lasca Creek Watershed being its heartland, as one of the most significant large natural sites left in all of the West Kootenays.

A lushly forested, unroaded 50,000 hectare wild area, it presents us with an option which will never again occur--the opportunity to preserve the complete biological heritage of this unique "Landscape Unit" found nowhere else on Earth. The Land of the Wolverine is home to many spectacular animal species including ospreys, great blue herons, bald eagles, canyon wrens, Townsend big-eared bats, grizzly bears, and the rapidly disappearing magnificent woodland caribou, cousin of the barrenland caribou.

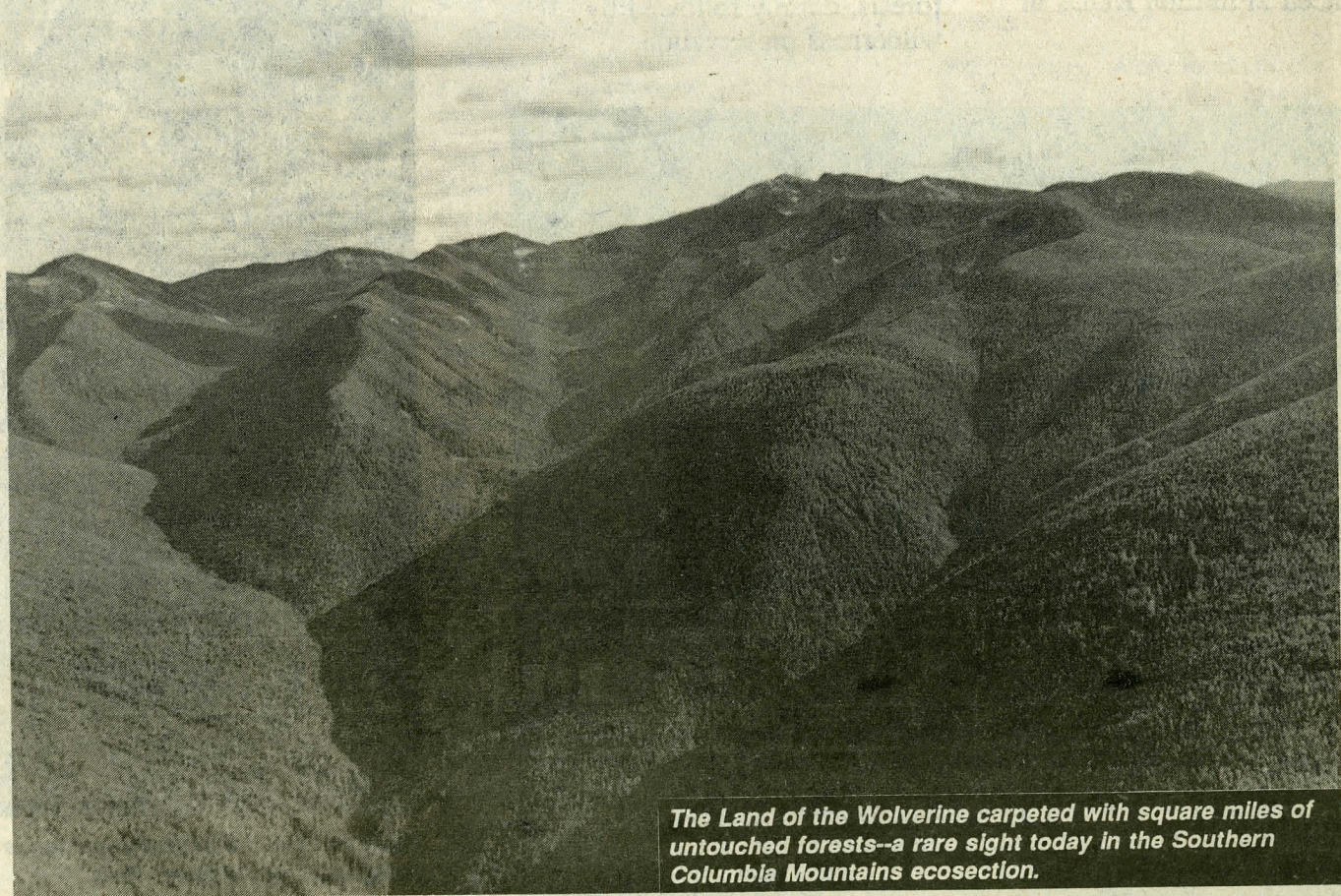
The Selkirk herd of woodland caribou, which migrates between the U.S. and Canada within

this fragile ecosystem is protected in the U.S. by the federal Endangered Species Act. This ecosystem also supports the Selkirk subpopulation of grizzly bears, the subject of an international grizzly bear recovery plan. While both their habitats are protected in the U.S., currently none of it is protected in Canada. The Wolverine Wilderness provides us an opportunity to extend much needed additional

protection for these two threatened species.

Preserving an estimated 12 percent of the world's wilderness on a representative ecosystems basis was recommended by the 1987 United Nations Brundtland Commission as an absolutely necessary measure for ensuring the protection of species genetic diversity and continuity. Over the last two years protection

efforts in Canada have been shamefully stalled. Only 3.4 percent of the nation's land area is under park protection. B.C. has a slightly better record with approximately 6 percent of its land base protected. But in the Southern Columbia Mountains, one of the unique biogeoclimatic zones of B.C.--of which the Wolverine Wilderness is a part--only one percent is preserved or protected within parks.  
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*The Land of the Wolverine carpeted with square miles of untouched forests--a rare sight today in the Southern Columbia Mountains ecosection.*

photo above by Ted Setter

photo by Anthony Cones

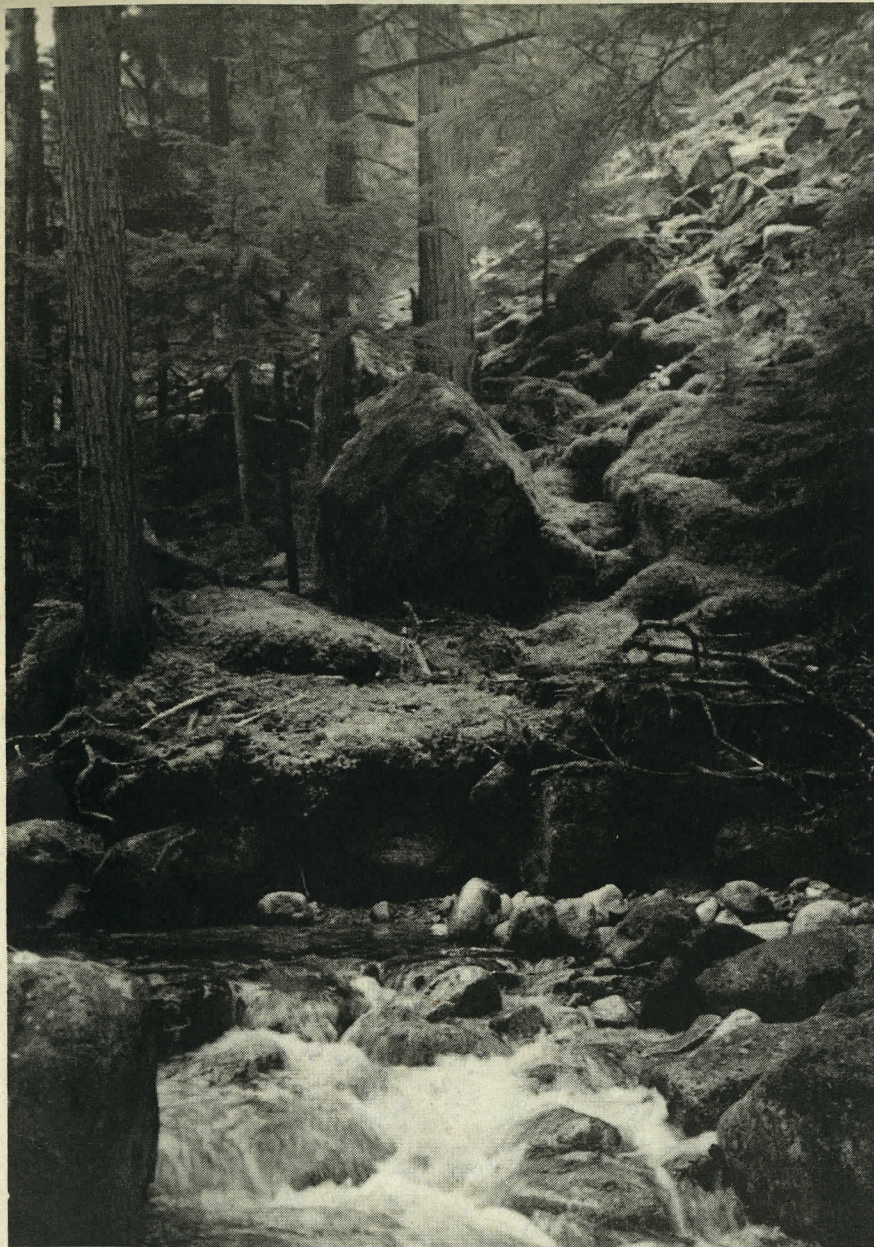


photo by Claudette Burton

*Moss covered boulders beside Lasca Creek attest to the balanced, stable, well established ecosystem.*

## Forest recreation earns big dollars

# Native concerns ignored

Lasca Creek and the isthmus surrounding it are part of the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket (Kootenai) Nation's traditional territories. For generations prior to the settlement of immigrants in the interior of "British Columbia", this region was known as the Land of the Wolverine. Pictographs still visible in various locations attest to the continuing spiritual presence of the area's Native people.

The Ktunaxa Nation never relinquished its "sovereignty" over the lands that fed and sheltered its ancestors. It never signed "any treaties with any government." Officially, since 1981, the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council has been negotiating in good faith with the federal and provincial governments regarding

recognition of their peoples' Aboriginal Title of their traditional lands to "ensure their independence and self reliance, traditionally and socially..."

In disregard of this due process, the Kootenay Lake Forest District personnel, and more recently the B.C. Ministry of Forests officials, seem to have somehow "forgotten" to consult with the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Nation as to whether or not it consented to having the trees in the Land of the Wolverine cut down for someone else's benefit.

The Sinixt people of the Lower Arrow Lakes Band also claim historical presence in the area citing certain sacred sites including burial grounds as evidence of their traditional occupancy.

## Wolverine Wilderness provides irreplacable grizzly bear and woodland caribou habitat

Wilderness is critical habitat for:  
-the Selkirk subpopulation of grizzly bears, believed to number 30 to 40 but in decline. The U.S./Canada Interagency Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan cites road building and resulting increased human access as the most pressing threat to the grizzly in the area.

-the Selkirk Mountain Woodland caribou herd, which migrates

highest concentrations of these lichens grow on beetle-killed snags, naturally occurring habitats which may take hundreds of years to develop. It is estimated that 90 percent of this herds' food supply comes from old growth forests.

-significant numbers of old-growth Pacific Yew, a tree species which has received considerable attention recently

B.C. Ministry of Forests published in 1990 under the title "A Summary of How British Columbians Use and Value Their Public Forest Lands For Recreation," found that British Columbians use their provincial forests far more than was previously estimated. Recreation User Days (RUDs) increased from 15 million in 1984 to over 40 million in 1990. The study showed that:

- provincial forests are used approximately twice as much as provincial parks. The parks experienced 21 million RUDs in 1990.

British Columbians spend more than \$1.5 billion each year participating in recreation activities in provincial forests--an average of \$1,450 per household.

- Nature study was the most popular recreational activity. More than 22 million RUDs were devoted to simply being in the forest.

Another study, Forestry Canada's 1989 National Survey of Canadian Public Opinion on Forestry Issues, found that wildlife protection was considered the most important use of Canada's forests, closely followed by wilderness preservation.

**"Everything is related. Mother Earth cannot be renewed without our renewal; the pollution in the atmosphere will not be transmuted until the pollution of the mind is transformed. And the transformation comes from putting aside the idea of 'them' and 'us' and understanding that we are all human being here together. It is we who have the capability and responsibility to renew life on Earth."**

- Dhyani Ywahoo, Tsalagi (Cherokee) medicine woman, *Voices of Our Ancestors*, Shambhala Publications Inc., 1987

-the Seikirk Mountain woodland caribou herd, which migrates north from Washington and Idaho to feed on the lichens which grow in old-growth areas. Some of the

species which has received considerable attention recently due to the newly discovered cancer-fighting drug called taxol produced naturally in its bark.



*Giant trees in the bottom moistlands of Lasca Creek were spared from the ravages of recent forest fires.*

photo by Claudette Burton

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The Kootenay Lake area lost 80 percent of its old-growth forests at the turn of the century when prospectors set massive fires to expose the bare rock in their relentless pursuit of exploitable mineral deposits. Today much of the unburnt 20 percent has already been logged and almost none of this precious remaining original growth is protected in the Southern Columbia Mountains region. The Land of the Wolverine Wilderness area contains significant stands of old growth cedar, hemlock, Englemann spruce, and western larch that must be preserved to protect the silvicultural heritage of the Kootenays.

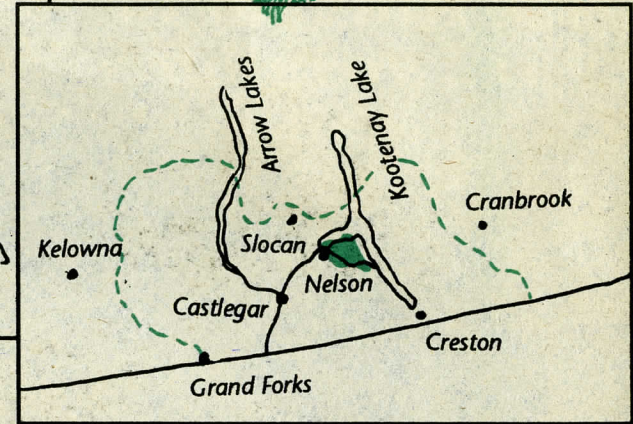
This remaining fragment of the Southern Columbia Mountains Ecosystem is in imminent peril. It has never been adequately studied or inventoried, yet logging is slated to begin in 1993 in the Lasca Creek watershed. An access road is presently being built onto the shoulder of Lasca Creek.

Hours of public meetings, reams of protest letters, and even physical blockades of the road have not yet succeeded in altering the attitudes of industry and the Ministry of Forests who still believe that the forests here are not special and the place should be clearcut logged. In 1990 the area was submitted as a wilderness park proposal under the Parks Plan for the 90s process. Like all earlier local community efforts, this submission too was rejected by government.

*Proposed*  
**LASCA  
CREEK**  
*Wilderness  
Preserve*

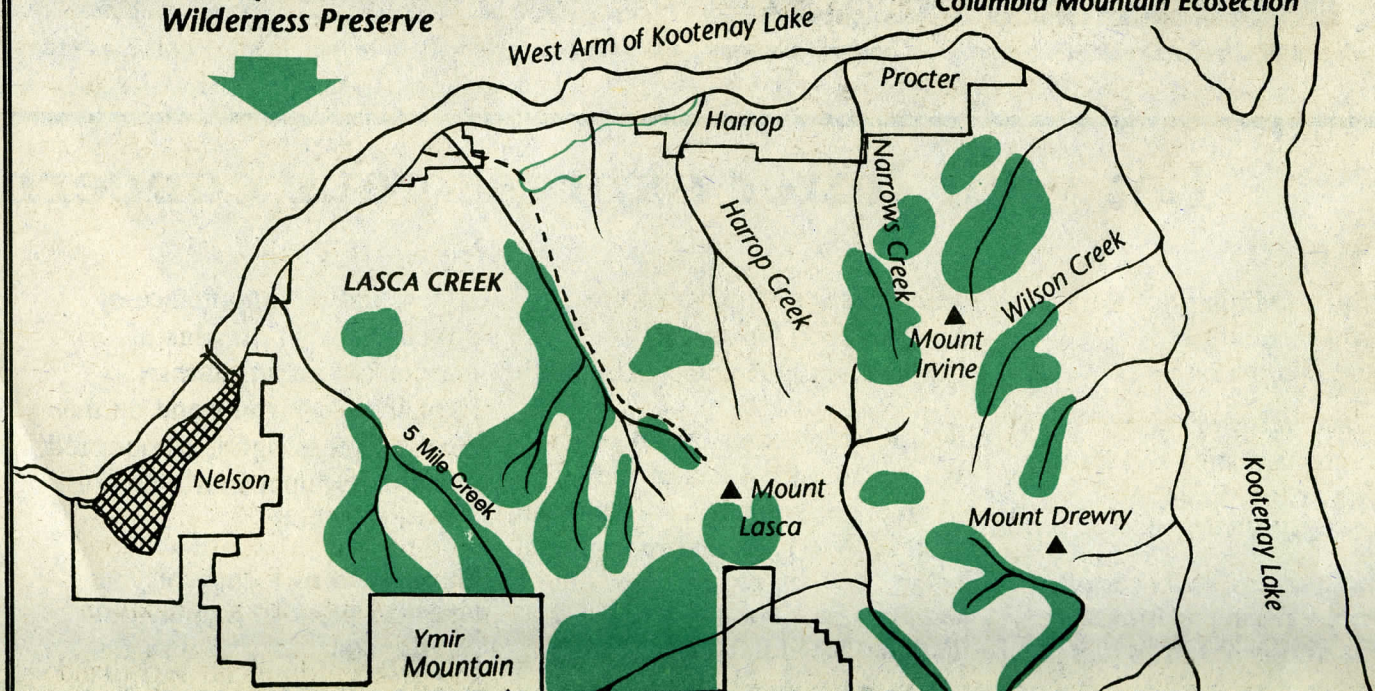


**Southern Columbia  
Mountain Ecoregion**



**Proposed LASCA CREEK Wilderness Preserve  
in relationship to detail of Southern  
Columbia Mountain Ecoregion**

**Detail of Proposed Lasca Creek  
Wilderness Preserve**



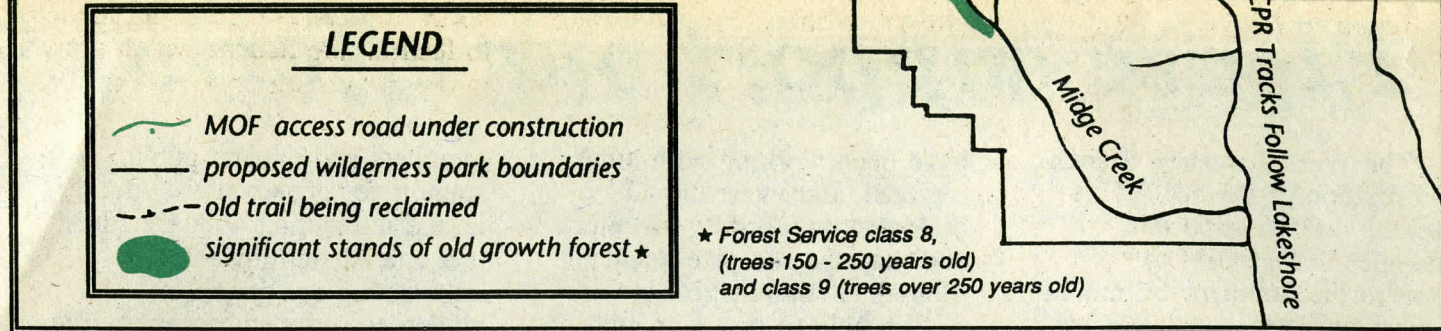
The fate of Lasca Creek itself portends a much larger issue. If the road into Lasca is completed and logging begins, the biological integrity of the Southern Columbia Mountains will be compromised and much of its essence lost forever.

The irrevocability of the consequences of logging has made the controversy over the fate of Lasca Creek more than a local land use planning issue. This is our last chance to preserve a biologically viable, Southern Columbia Mountains old growth forest for the grizzly, the caribou, and for future generations. Provincial, national, and international efforts are crucial to the conservation of this area. Local efforts alone have not yet succeeded. Your help is needed now. With everyone caring and acting on their concern, this outstanding and unique area will be saved!



photo by Parks Canada

A Woodland caribou.



## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

**1886** - Large silver deposit discovered outside of Nelson. Silver King mine opens.

**1890s** - prospectors flock to area in hopes of striking it rich. Mountainsides are torched for ease of ore location. An estimated 80 percent of the surrounding old growth forests are burnt down.

**1950s** - B.C. Ministry of Forest (MoF) begins allocating timber to companies on "volume based tenures" for Kootaney Lake District.

**1984** - MoF presents Westar's cutting plans for the area to local communities (Harrop and Procter). These plans are rejected. Harrop-Procter Watershed Protection Committee formed requesting involvement in local forest planning. MoF agrees.

**1985** - Westar goes bankrupt; cutting plans again shelved.

**1987** - Citizens form West Arm Watershed Alliance (WAWA) in response to unsightly logging of neighbouring Redfish Creek.

**1989** - Ministry of Forests calls public meeting to present four different logging plans for Five-Mile Creek, Lasca, and Mill Creeks. No community input sought; plans angrily rejected by local citizens.

**1990** - Three hundred citizens attend hearing in Procter. In heated exchange, MoF admits they will allow logging whether local folks like it or not.

**1990 August** - WAWA submits West Arm Wilderness Park proposal to B.C. Parks Plan for the 90s process in an attempt to protect area's watersheds. Proposal filed and ignored, despite overwhelming public support for it.

**1991 July** - In pre-election manoeuvre local MLA Howard Dirks "fast tracks" decision on road into Lasca Creek. Public outrage grows.

**1991 September** - Six hundred citizens blockade road construction access to Lasca Creek; 64 are arrested.

**1991 September** - NDP endorse the goal of World Wildlife Fund's Endangered Spaces Campaign to complete a network of parks and other reserves representing B.C.'s natural regions by the year 2000.

**1991 October** - West Kootenay Forest Accord signed by environmental groups, IWA and BCGEU. All agreed on need to save some old growth forests.

**1991 November** - Lasca Creek deemed one of eight "environmentally contentious areas" in B.C. by new NDP government. Decision making process that allowed logging is reviewed. Road construction continues throughout review process.

**1992 February** - Many local citizens blockade road construction; four are sued by contractor for lost wages. Construction halted for spring breakup.

**1992 March** - After numerous postponements, government announces that Lasca will not be placed under logging deferral or a "log-around" while park planning process and land use planning process for the area are underway.

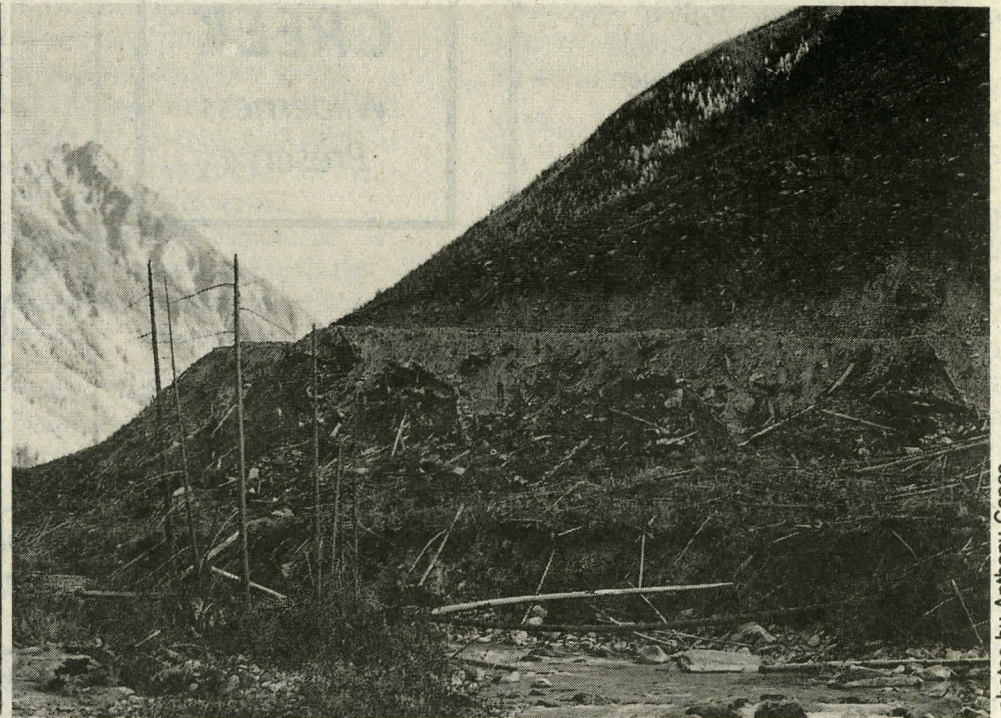
**1992 April** - Local opposition grows. When road construction starts back up, citizens again obstruct machinery.

**1992 May** - Various parties arrested for defying the courts. Road construction proceeds unimpeded. Volunteers begin clearing historic trail up Lasca.

**"If we are ever to learn how to restore damaged forests, we urgently need to fully protect ecologically viable landscapes of old-growth forests."**

- Herb Hammond, RPF, *Seeing the Forest Among the Trees*, Polestar Press Ltd., 1991

# DON'T LET THEM CLEARCUT LASCA



photos by Anthony Cones

*Scalped slopes of Glacier Creek at the northeast end of Kootenay Lake stand as testimony to recent logging practices found acceptable by the MoF.*

## Let your letter express your concern.

### Write to:

Dan Miller, Ministry of Forests  
Legislative Buildings,  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

John Cashore, Minister of  
Environment, Lands and Parks  
Legislative Buildings,  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Darlene Marzari, Minister of  
Tourism, Parliament Buildings,  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Jean Charest, Minister of the  
Environment, House of  
Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Tell them whether or not you believe that the Land of the Wolverine is much more valuable as a genetic bank and recreational refuge than as a short term timber supply area. Point out how you feel about wildlife values, water

issues, and the importance of protecting what remains of interior old-growth forests. Explain where you stand on the need for meaningful, empowered community input in resource use decision making.

Please send us a copy of your letter for proof of numbers of people concerned about this

special area.

Western Canada Wilderness  
Committee - West Kootenay  
Branch, P.O. Box 186  
Nelson, B.C., V1L 5P9



# Please support our efforts

The West Kootenay Branch-information of the WCWC is working on two important strategies in the effort to preserve the Southern Columbia Mountains Ecosystem. We are actively pursuing constructive action in both research and public involvement.

In January 1992 we nominated Lasca Creek as a candidate area under the B.C. government's Old Growth Strategy process. Since then we

have been working with local, regional, and international biologists to identify, inventory, and map the ecosystem and its biological composition.

We believe that reopening the existing heritage trail up the Lasca drainage is the best way to enable the public to see for themselves the beauty and diversity of the old-growth forests of the Land of the Wolverine. Trail building is a proven way to involve and empower community

members and expand public support for preservation. Being in and interacting with the forest is a crucial step towards manifesting the dream of wilderness now and forever. We are mobilizing volunteer crews and expect to begin work on the lower section of the trail this summer, reaching into the high country as the snow melts. Please contact us using the form on the back of this newsletter if you would like to get involved.

## Credits and Thanks

This paper is the product of the efforts of WCWC/West Kootenay staff: Claudette Burton, Candice Batycki, and Evan McKenzie plus innumerable helpful community members.

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## YES, I'LL HELP PROTECT LASCA

- Here is my gift of    \$25   \$50   \$100   \$10,000    (other--all donations, no matter how small, help!). I understand that it is tax deductible and that all of my donation will go towards the West Kootenay Wilderness Committee's campaign to preserve Lasca Creek Watershed.
- Yes, I want to become a Wilderness Committee member. Enclosed is my \$30 membership fee.
- I live in the Kootenays and want to help you reopen the heritage trail up Lasca Creek.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (please print) Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Postal/ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your cheque or money order payable to WCWC - Lasca Creek Protection Fund and mail it to Western Canada Wilderness Committee West Kootenay Branch, P.O. Box 186, Nelson, B.C. V1L 5P9. **Thank you very much for your support!**

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WWF World Wildlife Fund  
Fonds Mondial pour la Nature

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SPACES

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PARTENAIRES DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

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