

AltaLink targets internationally revered landscape

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The dramatic beauty of the eastern flanks of Alberta's Livingstone Range is known to tens-of-thousands of Albertans, and to perhaps millions more, people who have seen this landscape in Hollywood movies, or via Alberta's Remember to Breathe tourism videos.

AltaLink has just released plans to construct transmission towers and string overhead transmission lines across this revered and internationally marketed Crown of the Continent landscape, a landscape that's also home to the MD of Pincher Creek's Heritage Rangeland Viewscape (designated in 2008).

The view looks southwest across the crest of the Livingstone Range, a serrated knife-edge flyway for the world's greatest concentration of golden eagles—more than 5,000 have been counted during a single autumn migration. The Piikani, for countless generations, have known this landscape as Piitaistakis, Place of the Eagles.

The eastern flanks of Alberta's Livingstone Range are home to rare rough fescue grasslands, endangered limber pines and whitebark pines. These species serve as a floral frame for a stunning array of wildlife species, including threatened pure-strain west slope cutthroat trout and grizzly bears as well as herds of bighorn sheep, elk, mountain goats and an astonishing number of moose.

AltaLink has proposed routes that would destroy rough fescue grasslands, cut through endangered forests of limber pine and cast ominous shadows over staging areas for trumpeter swans and other waterfowl. These proposed transmission line routes and their sprawling substations would violate the integrity of a Serengeti-like landscape that's critical winter range for wild ungulates, and habitat for grizzly bears. The proposed intrusions would degrade—and potentially overwhelm—a conservation corridor that's being designed to allow safe wildlife movement across Highway 3.

AltaLink has proposed this new routing in response to a reported need for new power lines, but many reviewers question the described need. Regardless of need, the proposed routings, instead of following existing industrial corridors, would, if allowed, violate the aesthetic and ecological integrity of an iconic, drop-dead-gorgeous Alberta landscape.

AltaLink's proposed transmission line routes are an affront to the people of Alberta. They've been created in apparent contradiction to the words of its President and CEO, Scott Thon, and in seeming defiance of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), a land-use defining document that is crystal clear in its commitment to concentrate new development within existing industrial corridors.

It is imperative that the Province of Alberta and the people of Alberta demand that AltaLink be required to maintain the integrity of this internationally renowned landscape, comply with the defining words of the SSRP, ... and walk the talk as defined by AltaLink's President and CEO. He says: My role at AltaLink is to listen and to lead.

Respecting the land and resources means Alberta must adopt new principles of minimizing the footprint, maximizing capacity infrastructure and conserving the land resource.

Sincerely,

David McIntyre

Crowsnest Pass