

Edmonton, October 1, 2002

Former premier honoured at park commemoration

A ceremony was held today to commemorate the naming of the final site designated under the Special Places program in honour of former premier Don Getty.

The Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park was recommended by Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Community Development, with responsibility for parks and protected areas.

"Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park represents the legacy of the Special Places program that has helped protect our natural heritage for ourselves, our children and their children," said Premier Ralph Klein. "Since the concept of protecting Special Places began during Don Getty's tenure as Alberta's 11th premier, it is a fitting tribute to dedicate the final site in his honour."

"This dedication recognizes Mr. Getty's many years of public service to our province, and reflects his deep appreciation for recreation, tourism, the great outdoors, and the importance of family," said Zwozdesky.

Mr. Getty and his family attended the ceremony at the Elbow District Office.

"I would like to say thank you on behalf of my family and myself," said former premier Getty. "This certainly is an exciting day for us. I am very proud and honoured to have such a beautiful area in the province as my namesake. I have a strong belief in the importance of the family. The opportunity for Albertans and their families to enjoy the great outdoors and to experience the province's natural and cultural heritage is priceless."

The Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park consists of a number of parcels of land along the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains. The interconnectedness of the adjacent protected areas and the Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park adds significantly to their overall ability to ensure the long-term survival of wide ranging predators such as grizzly bears, wolves and cougars. Bighorn sheep, elk and mountain goats can also move unimpeded between the protected areas.

The United Nations has proclaimed 2002 as the International Year of Mountains - a year highlighting the global importance of mountain ecosystems. It is appropriate that the commemoration for the Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park takes place during the International Year of Mountains as the site has added significantly to the ecological integrity of the existing protected areas and parks in the Rocky Mountains, and in particular, Kananaskis Country.

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A map of Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park is available at <http://www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200210/13262.html>

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Backgrounder

Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park

Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park, honouring Alberta's 11th premier, is 628 square kilometres in size and is located west of Calgary. The park consists of several parcels of land situated from just west of the Ghost River Wilderness Area in the north to the southern tip of Kananaskis Country in the south. The park is adjacent to protected areas such as Banff National Park, Ghost River Wilderness Area and the Elbow Sheep Wildland Provincial Park.

Among the many exceptional places in this park is the Elbow River valley, a place with panoramic views and exceptional examples of felsenmeer, stone stripes and stone polygons. These periglacial features are well preserved with little disturbance from industrial activities and recreation use. The northern part of Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park provides ecological connectivity between Ghost River Wilderness, Banff National Park, Bow Valley Wildland and Yamnuska Natural Area. The central part connects Elbow Sheep Wildland with Bluerock Wildland and Sheep River Provincial Park. The southern parcels help protect wildlife movement corridors through Plateau Mountain Ecological Reserve and Mt. Livingstone Natural Area to Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Natural Area. The western most pieces connect Peter Lougheed Provincial Park south along the continental divide to Beehive Natural Area.

Recognized under the Special Places program, the park is a significant part of Alberta's parks and protected areas network that preserves our natural heritage for future generations. The Special Places program was initiated during the tenure of Honourable Don Getty, Premier of Alberta from 1985 to 1992. On behalf of Don Getty, the late Don Sparrow, then Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, attended a press conference with His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, International President of the World Wildlife Fund. At this 1992 event, Alberta made the commitment to prepare a "made in Alberta" strategy for implementing our component of Canada's Endangered Spaces program. That strategy came to be known as *Special Places 2000: Alberta's Natural Heritage*.

At one of their final meetings, the Provincial Coordinating Committee, a 24-member, multi-stakeholder group appointed to guide the Special Places program, recommended designation of the Prime Protection Zone in Alberta's Eastern Slopes. The Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park encompasses a significant portion of this Prime Protection Zone in response to this recommendation.

Through the designations under Alberta's Special Places program, wilderness areas are better protected thanks to the thoughtful planning and care of Albertans. We can feel confident that wilderness areas will continue to exist for the benefit of the wildlife and ecosystems, and for our own enjoyment.

For additional information on Alberta's parks and protected areas, visit www.cd.gov.ab.ca

Fast Facts:

- Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park was designated a provincial park on July 24, 2001.
- The park encompasses 627.75 km² of land.

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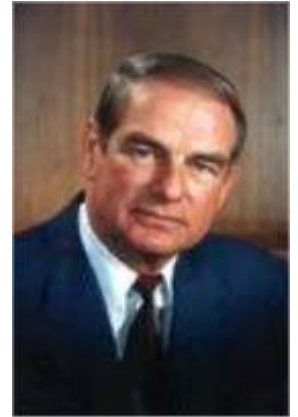
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Backgrounder

Donald R. Getty

Don Getty was the 11th premier of Alberta (1985-1992) and made tremendous contributions to business, politics and athletics in Canada.

Getty was born in Westmount, Quebec in 1933. He graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 1955 with an honours degree in business administration. Getty began his business career with Imperial Oil and later became Canada's youngest independent oil company president when he formed Baldonnel Oil and Gas Ltd.



Having achieved a great deal of success in Alberta, Getty became interested in public service as a way to give something back to the province he had grown to love. In 1967, he was elected to the Legislature as a Progressive Conservative and helped form the official opposition. After his party won the election in 1971, Getty was appointed Alberta's first Minister of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs and worked to ensure that Alberta was an equal partner in making national decisions that affected the province.

Getty's next cabinet post was as Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. He established Alberta's constitutional right to ownership of its natural resources, began the process of economic diversification by promoting the forestry and petrochemical industries, and helped to negotiate the Syncrude oil sands project. In 1979, after 12 years in the legislature, Getty left politics to spend more time with his family and return to his business career.

Remaining interested in provincial politics, Getty resumed his political career in 1985 when he was elected leader of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party and sworn in as Premier. He led the Government of Alberta through an accelerated diversification of the provincial economy, signed the first agreement in Canada to establish self-government and a land base for Métis people, and began the process of fiscal restraint in difficult economic times. He also emphasized the importance of families and created Alberta's Family Day holiday, the first in Canada.

As premier, Getty made important contributions that affected all of Canada. Under his direction, Alberta held the country's first senate election, which resulted in Canada's first and only appointment of an elected senator. He also played a leadership role among the premiers during negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement, Triple E Senate, Meech Lake Accord and Charlottetown Accord. In 1992, Getty resigned as premier and left the political arena.

Getty has received several honours for his contributions to Alberta's Aboriginal Peoples. The Whitefish Lake Band made him an honorary chief in 1990 and the Métis Nation of Alberta awarded him the Order of the Sash in 1991. Getty was named to the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1999 for his outstanding contributions to business, politics and athletics in Canada, and for his work with governance issues of Alberta's Aboriginal Peoples.

Getty continues to be active in business, operates his own investment and consulting firm, and serves as a board member for several international companies. He and his wife Margaret live in Edmonton.

Send us your comments or questions

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