



The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

NEWS RELEASE

For Release on August 6, 2005

28 July 2005

The media is invited to attend this important event.

Date: August 6, 2005

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Location: Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Centre Block, Saskatchewan,
Cypress Hills Resort Inn, Wapiti Room

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Alberta Community Development—Parks and Protected Areas, Saskatchewan Environment, and Parks Canada Agency Receive the National Light Pollution Abatement Award

Toronto —The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC) presented its National Light Pollution Abatement Award today at the annual Saskatchewan Summer Star Party held in Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park, Centre Block, in Saskatchewan. Alberta Community Development—Parks and Protected Areas, Saskatchewan Environment, and Parks Canada Agency received the National Light Pollution Abatement Award to recognize the creation of the Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve.

Assistant Deputy Minister David Phillips of Saskatchewan Environment, Cheryl Penney, Superintendent South Saskatchewan Unit, Parks Canada Agency and Rosemary Jones, Planning Team Leader Alberta Community Development, accepted the National Light Pollution Abatement Award on behalf of their respective organizations.

"Parks Canada is proud to be recognized, in partnership with the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Light Pollution Abatement Award for the contributions of Ft. Walsh National Historic Site of Canada towards the Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve," said the Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada. "Through our work and the efforts of the RASC, we are able to present visitors with a pristine night-time sky to enjoy as part of their natural, historical and cultural experience in the area."

Each year, The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada recognizes organizations that make outstanding progress towards reducing light pollution. The criteria include the use of full cut-off fixtures and energy efficient light sources, the minimizing of glare and light trespass in lighting applications, and the reduction of sky glow. Protecting the night from light pollution is important because of light's impact on nocturnal species, energy conservation, astronomical observation and human enjoyment of the dark night sky.

On September 28, 2004 the three agencies declared Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and Fort Walsh National Historic Site to be the Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve. A dark-sky preserve is a

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sanctuary from artificial light; an area that maintains the nocturnal environment in as pristine a manner as possible. There is no lighting throughout most of Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve and Alberta and Saskatchewan are proceeding to reduce light pollution in Elkwater and Core Area. By reducing or eliminating light pollution, a dark-sky preserve allows the environment to thrive naturally and allows visitors to experience the environment more fully. The Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve is the world's largest, comprising over 39,000 hectares, and it is the darkest, easily accessible dark-sky preserve.

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada is dedicated to the advancement of astronomy and allied sciences. The Society has a membership of over 4600 professional and amateur astronomers from across Canada.

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Editor's Note: Please see the attached backgrounder.

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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<More below>



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Backgrounder

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park & Dark-Sky Preserve

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park is one of the most popular tourism attractions in southwest Saskatchewan and southeast Alberta and has a \$50 million combined economic impact on the local economies every year. Each year, close to 500,000 visitors enjoy the interprovincial park's more than 900 individual campsites and many group campsites. It is Canada's first and only interprovincial park, located in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan, the park consists of the Centre Block and West Block and totals about 19,000 hectares. On the Alberta side, the park encompasses about 20,450 hectares of land.

Cypress Hills was established as a provincial park in Saskatchewan in 1931, as a provincial park in Alberta in 1951, as an interprovincial park in 1989, and as a Dark-Sky Preserve in 2004. The Cypress Hills are the highest point in Canada between the Rocky Mountains and Labrador, with a maximum elevation of 1,466 metres above sea level. The montane environment is an oasis of mixed and lodgepole pine forests in the midst of the Canadian prairies. Combined, the interprovincial park contains 90 kilometres of hiking trails and a wealth of plant and animal life, including 20 species of orchids. And because it preserves nighttime darkness, it is a remarkable place to view the natural beauty of the starry sky. Cypress Hills offers its visitors a unique natural and cultural experience. The park's landscape of mixed and pine forests and fescue grassland surrounded by short grass prairie and ranchland is rich with historical significance and natural wonder. Boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, camping, wildlife watching and stargazing are just some of the ways in which the park can be enjoyed.

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

The Saskatchewan Summer Star Party is held annually in Cypress Hills Inter-provincial Park each August, where more than 250 participants, amateur astronomers and their families enjoy the dark skies the park can provide. Astronomers have been coming to the park for more than 20 years, and the SSSP is in its 9th year. The keynote speaker for this year's party will be Ivan Semeniuk, of *Discovery Channel's Daily Planet*. This talk will immediately follow the awards presentation. For more information on the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party, please visit www.usask.ca/psychology/sarty/rasc/starparty.html

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**For additional information about light pollution and responsible lighting, visit
www.syz.com/rasc/lp and www.darksky.org**

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