

June 20, 2002  
Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society  
Box 4990  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6E 5G8  
Hon. Ralph Klein, Premier, and  
Hon. Mike Cardinal, Minister of Alberta Sustainable Development  
Government of Alberta,  
Edmonton, Alberta.

Dear Sirs:

**The Wildlife Society** is a large, international organization of biologists that promotes professionalism and responsibility in science-based conservation of wildlife. The **Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society** represents 275 dedicated wildlife specialists working in industry, government, and NGOs throughout the province. Because of our focus and concern about the continued welfare of the province's wildlife, we question the wisdom of recent announcements of substantial reductions in staff and funding in the Wildlife Management Division of Alberta's Sustainable Resource Development Department

We understand that on June 21 of this year a large portion of the professional expertise and nearly 300 years of combined experience in the field of wildlife management will have been removed from the provincial Wildlife Management Division. It appears incongruent this is occurring at a time when Alberta's population is rapidly expanding and the pressures on the landbase (and water) for industrial, recreational, urban, and agricultural development are extreme and will lead to increased landuse conflicts in the province. The need for effective wildlife conservation is required as never before. It seems apparent there is a lack of understanding and concern for the value and complexity of maintaining a healthy natural environment.

The dramatic staff and funding reduction appears to be largely unplanned (based on a buy-out offer to more experienced staff) with no regard to preserving continuity in effective long-standing programs that have evolved over several years to meet the mandate of the province's wildlife management agency. It will essentially result in the collapse of the former network of central and field biological staff that worked as a team to collect the biological information necessary to meet the Division's mandate.

We fear the Division will now be unable to meet its regular mandated obligation to monitor wildlife populations, assure their protection and health, as well as manage consumptive use regimes. A foreshadowing of this eventuality is already evident in the discontinuation of the hunter harvest return questionnaire that operated for 16 years in collaboration with Alberta's sportsmen groups, providing information to support many of the harvest and management decisions.

Certainly new obligations such as that initiated by recent passing of federal legislation pursuant to endangered species protection and recovery will present a major challenge with diminished fiscal resources. Previous public feedback in other areas has indicated a strong negative stance on relinquishing provincial roles to federal staff.

We urge you to consider the probable consequences to the wildlife resource, as the majority of Albertans place a very high value in a healthy natural environment.

Specifically we would appreciate hearing your reply to the following:

- Will additional funding be made available to facilitate the Division in meeting its regular mandated obligations?
- How will the remaining staff be reorganized to fill lost key positions?
- Will some functions be discontinued and/or will offices be shut down?
- What plans are in place to address the provincial role pursuant to new federal legislation relevant to endangered species protection and recovery?
- Can we expect a seamless continuation of efforts to annually produce hunting and trapping regulation programs?
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is now a reality on Alberta's big game farms, with potential devastating effects on wild ungulates. Will adequate resources be allocated to combating this disease?
- Can we expect to see the completion and implementation of species management plans (some of which have been in draft form for several years)?
- Can we expect that the Division will continue to provide input and propose effective protective and/or mitigative measures for land use proposals?

We await your reply, which will hopefully provide assurance that the provincial wildlife management agency will have adequate fiscal and staffing resources to address the necessary management obligations as set out in the Alberta Wildlife Act.

Yours truly

B. Rippin, Conservation Committee Chair

Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Cc: All Alberta Members of the Legislative Assembly