

Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Honourable Ed Stelmach
Premier of Alberta
Room 307, Legislature Building
10800 – 97th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Honourable Mel Knight
Minister of Sustainable Resource Development
#404 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

October 11, 2010

Dear Premier Stelmach and Minister Knight,

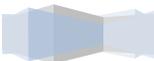
RE: Sale of critical native grassland habitat to SLM Spud Farms Ltd.

Only 5% of the land area in Alberta exists as native prairie grasslands, and these lands represent critical habitat for numerous Species at Risk such as the burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, Sprague's pipit, long billed curlew and other species under threat from habitat loss. It is important to understand, therefore, that it is not a matter of preserving the 'best' habitat for these species, but rather, preserving any remaining habitat for these species.

A recent announcement of the sale of 100 quarter sections of crown-owned, native prairie grassland in Alberta, therefore, came as a surprise to our organization. Scientific research clearly shows that quantity and quality of habitat is the key limiting factor for endangered and threatened grassland species. Present use of the leased lands in question is for cattle grazing, an activity which is known to support native wildlife. However, it is anticipated that conversion to intensive agriculture (potato production) will undoubtedly result in the loss of this support for those species.

In the spirit of open and transparent government, we would ask the following,

- 1) a review of the Public Lands Act and include public consultation as a condition of any sale or swap of Crown land.
- 2) a copy of the Wildlife Assessment conducted for these lands be made available for our review.



Our organization, which advocates based on scientific evidence, supports previous letters from the Alberta Wilderness Association and the Alberta Fish and Game Association which call for an immediate stop to the sale of this critical land, and an opportunity for public discussion on this transaction.

We trust that the minister, and the government of Alberta, will make a responsible decision which is in the best interest of future generations.

Yours truly,

David Scobie
President, Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society

cc: David Swann, MLA, Leader Alberta Liberal Party
cc: Brian Mason, MLA, Leader New Democrat Party
cc: Danielle Smith, Leader Wildrose Alliance Party

