



Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society
Box 4990
Edmonton, Alberta.
T6E 5G8
October 3, 2011

The Honourable Alison Redford
Premier of Alberta
Room 307, Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Ms. Redford:

It was with a great deal of concern and disappointment that the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS) learned of the recent government-issued Request For Proposal (RFP) relative to agricultural development on 16,000 acres of native prairie grassland. This is the same 16,000 acres that were proposed for a potato farming development in 2010 (i.e. to Mr. Louis Ypma of SLM Spud Farms)

We are aware that the RFP does not, at this time, imply a sale of this parcel of crown land. We are also aware that the terms of the RFP call for rigorous attention to a determination of public benefit, economic viability, and protection of the environment. However, the very considerable opposition expressed last year, and subsequently this year, by a wide variety of individuals, groups, and through the media surely indicates to you that the property in question has unique social and environmental values beyond those of intensive agriculture.

The recent report to the group preparing the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan from the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) indicates 57% of the Province's natural grasslands have already been directly altered and no longer provide the critical environmental goods and services they once did. This benchmark of environmental health bodes poorly for the future of the planning area.

It is also disappointing to learn that the RFP for sale of this valuable property was broached before the South Saskatchewan Regional Planning group had submitted the first draft of their land use plan. The Land Use Forum process was touted to be the latest and best system to determine how our land would be allocated for use in the future. This pre-emptive action would seem inconsistent with that endeavor.

The present use of the land in question for cattle grazing has maintained much of the ecological characteristics of our native grasslands and continuation would serve to perpetuate those attributes while providing income to the agricultural community. Surely this land base is worth preserving in its original state so as to provide much needed habitat for the threatened and endangered species it is known to support.

It is also the professional opinion of ACTWS that the wildlife survey information for the land in question, gathered quickly in 2010, is both incomplete and obsolete and should be updated. Therefore, ACTWS offers its considerable ecological expertise to assist in formulating a public use plan for the property that would serve to preserve the

unique natural attributes of its habitat while allowing compatible economic benefits where possible.

Considering the above, we ask that your government reconsider the RFP and act to secure this considerable parcel of native grassland in a state that can continue to support the remaining rare and endangered biota that currently resides there.

Yours truly

Blair Rippin
Conservation Committee Chair,
Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society

cc: Hon. Mel Knight, MLA, Minister, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
cc: Hon. Rob Renner, MLA, Minister, Alberta Environment
cc: Hon. Jack Hayden, MLA, Minister, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
cc: Hon. Raj Sherman, MLA, Leader Alberta Liberal Party
cc: Hon. Brian Mason, MLA, Leader New Democrat Party
cc: Danielle Smith, Leader Wild Rose Alliance
cc: Hon. Leonard Mitzel, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat