



Mackenzie County
P.O. Box 640, 4511-46 Avenue
Fort Vermilion, AB
T0H 1N0
Ph: 780-927-3718
info@AlbertaNWSAR.ca

August 27, 2018

Honourable Amarjeet Sohi
Minister of Natural Resources Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

RE: Canada's 2010 Convention on Biological Diversity Commitment

Dear Minister Sohi:

Northwest Species at Risk Committee (NWSAR) would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Minister of Natural Resources Canada.

As you are aware, in 2010 the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity*, which included 20 global biodiversity goals known as the *Aichi Targets*. All parties to the convention including the Government of Canada agreed to achieve these targets with the inclusion of *Aichi Target 11* which aims to protect 17% of terrestrial areas and inland waters, and 10% of coastal and marine areas across Canada by 2020. Alberta Environment and Parks has also committed to achieving the protection of 17% of terrestrial areas and inland waters by 2020 in the province of Alberta.

As of the end of 2016, the Government of Canada recognized that 10.5% of terrestrial areas and inland waters, and 0.96% of coastal and marine areas are protected, through federally protected areas. NWSAR questions how provincial, municipal and privately-owned protected areas fit into the Government of Canada's 2020 target.

We applaud the Governments of Canada and Alberta for establishing the National Advisory Panel, National Steering Committee and an Indigenous Circle of Experts to advise the governments on achieving Canada's international commitment. However, the Local Government Advisory Group is yet to be formalized which means that a key advisory capacity and communication component for local level governments is missing from this national commitment discussion.



Earlier this month NWSAR achieved 98% support for a resolution we sponsored at the Northern Zone meeting of Rural Municipalities of Alberta, regarding our concerns on this topic. This resolution will be debated at Rural Municipalities of Alberta Fall Convention in Edmonton this November.

As we approach 2020, municipalities across Canada could see proposals for an increase in federal and provincial protected spaces to achieve their respective 17% targets.

For example, through caribou range planning, Alberta Environment and Parks has proposed to permanently protect approximately 1.6 million hectares of land in the NWSAR region for Bistcho, Yates, Caribou Mountains and Chinchaga herds; these areas would qualify and report towards their 17% target. (1.6 million hectares equates to approximately 15.8% of Mackenzie County's; 15.1% of County of Northern Lights' and 2% of Clear Hills County's geographic land-bases).

Additional protected spaces have the ability to reduce municipal tax assessment and provincial royalties from natural resource industries, which can impact municipal service capacities and operating budgets, significantly affecting our northern resource-based communities.

For some context, the NWSAR region measures approximately 120 square kilometers with a vastly distributed population of around 30,000 people. Sustainable growth opportunities in the north pose significantly reduced impacts to the surrounding natural environments, than the footprints of large urban centers. The viability factor of northern resource-based communities is vulnerable to large-scale land-use zonation amendments, such as large protected areas.

While we understand that this commitment is largely driven under the Environment and Climate Change Canada Ministry, NWSAR would appreciate a response from you on how your Ministry is advocating at the federal Cabinet level for the Natural Resources portfolio. In light of a commitment, which could jeopardize jobs and hinder sustainable community growth opportunities in many rural regions across Canada.

As a region significantly dependent on the natural resource industries, we would appreciate you sharing with us how you will support industry and in particular northern communities; we welcome any solutions you can provide to us on this complex federal commitment.

I would also like to impress that while we recognize the federal and provincial efforts to diversify our economy, we do not yet have the infrastructure required in order to swiftly transition to other economic opportunities.



On behalf of NWSAR, I would like to thank you in advance for your response. Please do not hesitate to contact me at: lisa@mackenziecounty.com or 780-841-5799 with any questions or concerns that you may have.

Sincerely,



Lisa Wardley
Chair, NWSAR Committee
Deputy Reeve, Mackenzie County

cc: Northwest Species at Risk Committee
Ryan Adam, Director of Issues Management, Natural Resources Canada

