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Alberta Northwest Species at Risk Committee



May 1, 2020

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
200 Sacre-Coeur Blvd – 2nd Floor
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H3

RE: Wood Buffalo National Park Action Plan Municipal Involvement

Dear Minister Wilkinson:

Alberta Northwest Species at Risk Committee (NWSAR) is an inter-municipal sub-committee comprised of elected officials from five Northwest Alberta municipalities. These municipalities include Clear Hills County, County of Northern Lights, Mackenzie County, Town of Rainbow Lake, and Town of High Level.

In December 2018, NWSAR submitted input on Parks Canada's Draft *Action Plan for Wood Buffalo National Park* (WBNP). Our input focused predominantly on the recommendation of meaningful local stakeholder involvement. It concerns us that the municipalities of NWSAR, and the wider northwest region, have not received an invitation to partake in the activities regarding thematic themes that could pose a potential risk to their operations, local economies, environment, residents and communities.

For example, increasing conservation areas through "effective buffer zones" to the western WBNP boundary provides diseased Wood Bison with increased protected space. This increase would then allow diseased Wood Bison within WBNP to roam closer to the "disease-free," Hay-Zama Bison herd and agricultural lands within Mackenzie County, where farmers raise cattle and domestic bison. Disease transfer of Bovine Brucellosis and/or Tuberculosis to domestic livestock could be

catastrophic for Canada's and Alberta's livestock industry, and any disease transfer to the Hay-Zama Bison herd could adversely affect Wood Bison recovery.

In addition, altered flow regimes of the Peace River from the W.A.C Bennet Dam to encourage ice jamming or flooding of the Peace-Athabasca-Delta (PAD) could affect the entirety of the Peace River along its course to the PAD. This includes municipalities and Indigenous Nations who rely upon the Peace River as their municipal water source, for ice bridge and ferry crossings, cultural and recreational activities.

It is NWSAR's view that municipalities located along the Peace River in Northwest Alberta should have the ability to be meaningfully involved in discussions, as well as provided opportunities to collaborate and contribute through existing working groups that are actively working on solutions regarding these thematic themes:

6.5 Theme: Conservation Area Connectivity

6.7 Theme: Environmental Flows and Hydrology

6.9 Theme: Wildlife and Habitat Conservation

We encourage you to strongly consider our request and include local government representation on working groups focused on the above three thematic themes.

Municipalities have local knowledge, concerns and solutions, which are important considerations for the continuous and successful implementation of *Wood Buffalo National Park World Heritage Site Action Plan*.

We hope this letter finds you well during this unprecedented time. We look forward to discussing this with you soon – please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions regarding our request.

Yours Sincerely,



Lisa Wardley
Chair, NWSAR
Councillor, Mackenzie County



Crystal McAteer
Vice Chair, NWSAR
Mayor, Town of High Level

cc: Honourable Jason Nixon – Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks

Arnold Viersen – MP Peace River – Westlock

Chris Warkentin – MP Grande Prairie – Mackenzie

Dan Williams – MLA Peace River

Dr. Martine Dubuc – Associate Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change Canada

Sue Milburn-Hopwood – Associate Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service

Vanessa Charwood – Director, Canadian Wildlife Service – Prairies

Laurie Wein – Senior Manager, WBNP World Heritage Site Action Plan, International and Intergovernmental Affairs, Heritage Designations and Programs

Cam Lane – Executive Director, Innovation and Intergovernmental Services Branch – Alberta Environment and Parks