

Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society
Box 4990, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G8



Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society
PO Box 3857 Fort Nelson BC V0C 1R0

2020 January 29

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Wilkinson:

The Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society represents over 300 wildlife professionals in the province of Alberta, and the Canadian Section represents professionals across all of Canada. Our mission is to inspire and empower wildlife professionals to engage in science-based management and conservation of wild animals and their habitats. We are affiliated with The Wildlife Society, the largest organization of wildlife professionals in the world.

We call your attention to current research on carbon sequestration and grassland conservation in context of carbon tax investment planning. Native grasslands in Canada, and associated wildlife, are in decline due to cultivation and agricultural intensification. Indeed, grassland birds are the most imperiled group of birds across the globe. Investing in the protection of our grasslands will not only help conserve species at risk but also will contribute to addressing climate change.

Research underway at the University of Alberta has shown that livestock grazing, if properly managed, can yield benefits for conservation. In particular, certain grazing systems have resulted in sequestration and storage of up to 3 tonnes of CO₂ equivalents into the soil, per hectare per year. When this carbon sequestration and storage is accumulated over large areas of grassland, this can appreciably offset current carbon emissions. Further, this can be accomplished whilst protecting wildlife habitats that support biodiversity, particularly of birds and plants.

The government's website indicates plans to plant 2 billion trees, which is a positive move toward climate-change mitigation. However, this program may not be in alignment with best practices in all ecosystems. In the Canadian Great Plains retaining the natural carbon sequestration function of the vegetation in grasslands is better for climate change, species at risk, and our ranching economy.

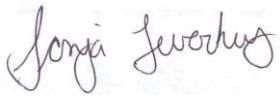
As you plan and investigate investment options for carbon tax revenues, we encourage you to consider the services provided by intact grasslands. Soil is a stable and secure sink for carbon if permanent grassland cover is maintained. Using carbon tax revenues to incentivize sound grazing practices and retain permanent grassland cover will increase carbon storage in the soil. Researchers have verified protocols and best management practices that will have important ramifications for climate change mitigation and the persistence of wildlife habitats. We have attached a more detailed description of this research for your information.

Please ensure that grasslands conservation is given consideration in guidelines for the investment carbon tax revenues. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with your staff as they plan investment from carbon tax revenues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea Morehouse". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Andrea Morehouse, Ph.D.
President, Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonja E. R. Leverkus". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Sonja E. R. Leverkus, Ph.D. RPBio RPF PAg
President, Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society