

Alberta Conservation Groups
P.O. Box 52031
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February 12, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

Alberta conservation groups are very pleased and encouraged by the fact that you have been elected as the 44th president of the United States of America. We represent 55 groups that have been working on conservation issues in Alberta for decades, and hope that through your influence that the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada will be motivated to implement more sustainable development of the Alberta tar sands.

Public lands across Alberta have faced an explosion of unmanaged industrial development, unprecedented in its rate, intensity and extent. As a major customer of Alberta products, your intervention could motivate a significant increase in boreal habitat protection; a change which government polling indicates Albertans support by over 85%. Ontario and Quebec have made major commitments to boreal conservation, and Alberta should be doing the same.

In June 2008 a Government of Alberta committee recommended immediate protection of 20-40% of the tar sands region from industrial use (enclosed). This recommendation has not been implemented. Instead of action the government has embarked on yet another land use planning process; and instead of change, the Alberta government intends to spend millions of dollars to spread the message that tar sands development is well-managed. The Government of Alberta's recent announcement (*Responsible Actions: A Plan for Alberta's Oil Sands*) to increase protected areas in the region is a result of the negative international attention. Sadly, the announcement does not outline any specific outcomes or goals for protection (i.e. X hectares or X% of new legislated protected areas) and, based on the Government of Alberta's track record, is meaningless until implemented.

Tar sands oil is regarded as dirty oil for many reasons including: impacts on water quality and quantity, health issues for downstream aboriginal communities, acid rain, boreal habitat elimination and degradation, loss of aboriginal peoples' treaty rights, and increased carbon dioxide emissions. Protecting 40% of the area from industrial use would significantly mitigate the last three of these concerns, and a plan prepared for the government already exists to do this (enclosed).

We hope that you will address this subject in your meeting with Prime Minister Harper on February 19, and encourage immediate implementation of new protected areas in north-eastern Alberta.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and/or your officials at your convenience to discuss this further and work together to improve the environmental performance of Alberta to make our province a more acceptable trading partner. We look forward to your response.

Yours truly,



Catherine Shier on behalf of:

<p>Alberta Foothills Network</p> <p>Alberta Wilderness Association</p> <p>Athabasca Bioregional Society</p> <p>Bow Valley Naturalists</p> <p>Calgary Chapter of The Council of Canadians</p> <p>Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Northern Alberta</p> <p>Edmonton Friends of the North Environmental Society</p> <p>Friends of Lily Lake</p> <p>Friends of the Old Man River</p> <p>Friends of the Whaleback</p> <p>Jasper Environmental Association</p> <p>Keepers of the Athabasca</p> <p>Peace River Environmental Society</p>	<p>Federation of Alberta Naturalists</p> <p>Member Clubs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Alberta Native Plant Council * Buffalo Lake Naturalists Club * Nature Calgary * Edmonton Nature Club * Fort McMurray Field Naturalists Society * Grassland Naturalists * Lac La Biche Birding Society * Lethbridge Naturalists Society * Peace Parkland Naturalists * Red Deer River Naturalists (RDRN) * Vermilion River Naturalist Club * Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS) * The Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild * Alberta Naturalization Network * Alberta Stewardship Network * Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society (BBO) * Beaver River Naturalist Society - Cold Lake * Big Lake Environmental Support Society * Bow-Kan Birders * Calgary Bird Banding * Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Athabasca * Crowsnest Conservation Society * Edmonton Naturalization Group * Ellis Bird Farm Ltd. * Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society * Friends of Blackfoot Society * Friends of Jasper National Park * Foothills Land Trust * Grant McEwan Mountain Club * Heritage Tree Foundation of Canada * JJ Collett Natural Area Foundation
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<p>Safe Drinking Water Foundation</p> <p>Under the Sleeping Buffalo Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lee Nature Sanctuary Society * Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory * Purple Martin Conservancy * Riverlot 56 Natural Areas Society * Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association * Wagner Natural Area Society (WNAS) * Weaslehead Glenmore Park Preservation Society * Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association * Wood Buffalo Wild Bird Club
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Enclosed: *Terrestrial Ecosystem Management Framework for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo*, Prepared by the Sustainable Ecosystem Working Group of the Cumulative Environmental Management Association, June 5, 2008

cc:

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