



**ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION**

*"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"*

Director of Population and Conservation Management Division  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
Environment Canada  
351 St. Joseph Boulevard,  
Gatineau QC  
K1A 0H3  
[MbregsReports-RapportsOmregs@ec.gc.ca](mailto:MbregsReports-RapportsOmregs@ec.gc.ca)

Honourable Diana McQueen,  
Minister of ESRD  
Province of Alberta  
#204 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6  
[draytonvalley.devon@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:draytonvalley.devon@assembly.ab.ca)  
[diana.mcqueen@gov.ab.ca](mailto:diana.mcqueen@gov.ab.ca)

The Hon. Peter Kent  
Minister of the Environment  
House of Commons  
Parliament Buildings  
Ottawa, ON. K1A 0A6  
[Minister@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@ec.gc.ca)

cc: [enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca](mailto:enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca)  
[ESRD.Info-Centre@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ESRD.Info-Centre@gov.ab.ca)

March 22, 2013

**Dear Sir/ Madam**

**Re: Proposed Sandhill Crane Hunt**

It recently came to the attention of Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) that once again a hunting season is being proposed for sandhill cranes in Alberta (*Proposals to Amend the Canadian Migratory Birds Regulations [Including Regulation Proposals for Overabundant Species] December 2012*). Despite AWA's documented interest when a similar hunt was proposed by the Alberta government in 2009, we have not been contacted directly about the new proposed hunt.

Although AWA has no objection to hunting when it is demonstrably sustainable, there is a reasonable doubt that this would in fact be the case with sandhill cranes, and so AWA does not support the proposed crane hunt.

Some of our earlier objections to a proposed sandhill crane hunt have not changed, including:

- **Continuing vulnerability of sandhill crane habitat.** The Alberta government's report, *General Status of Alberta Wild Species 2005*, recognizes the sandhill crane as a *species sensitive to human disturbance*. The report suggests that the species is *Vulnerable to wetland loss* in its boreal forest habitat and so, if nothing is currently being done to address this continuing wetland loss, the precautionary principle would suggest that introducing a hunt now would be inappropriate.
- **Risk of incidental killing of endangered whooping cranes.** The Alberta government's 2001 report, *Status of the whooping crane in Alberta*, states "accidental shooting due to misidentification and poaching are still of concern." The risk of even one misidentified whooping crane being shot is quite simply too high for such a critically endangered population. Although the government's proposals for hunting sandhill cranes do downplay the risk of whooping cranes being shot, it is only to be expected that accidental whooping crane deaths are likely to be under-reported. One might wonder how many of the 34 endangered whooping cranes which disappeared in the fall of 2008 during the southward migration were shot but never reported. Specifically, there are records of Whooping Crane in WMU's 254, 260 of the proposed hunting area.
- **Reasonable doubt about the population status of the Mid Continent Population (MCP) of Sandhill Cranes.** The US Fish and Wildlife Service 2012 report, *Status and Harvest of Sandhill Cranes*, advises that the long-term (1982-2008) trends for the Mid Continent Population(MCP) indicate that harvest has been increasing at a higher rate than population growth. According to Janice Hughes, author of the 2008 book *Cranes: a Natural History of a Bird in Crisis*, "hunting can place undue stress on local populations even if the species as a whole appears plentiful."

There is also a significant lack of data about the status of individual crane populations, including their migration routes. "No scientific study of Alberta sandhill crane populations has been carried out, and virtually nothing is known about the biology of this species in Alberta" (T.Sadler, per coms).

- **Why is a sandhill crane hunt needed?** One justification for introducing a new sandhill crane hunt is crop damage from migrating sandhill cranes. AWA is aware of just 5 reported complaints of sandhill cranes in crops over the past 10 years, all were in northern Alberta where there is no hunting season suggested. Of course if there were any such problems they could be alleviated in a number of ways without resorting to a hunt.

AWA believes that to go ahead with a provincial sandhill crane hunt would be inappropriate at the current time. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to hearing your decision on the proposed hunt.

Yours truly  
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Christyann Olson  
Executive Director