



Suffield Coalition Concerned About Delay in Government Response -- National Wildlife Areas Needed to Help Fight Extinction

Calgary, May 25, 2010. The Suffield Coalition today expressed concern about the failure by the Government of Canada to make a decision on EnCana's proposal to drill in the Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Suffield National Wildlife Area. The Joint Review Panel (JRP) that was established by the Federal Minister of Environment and the Alberta Energy Utilities Board to consider EnCana's proposal to drill 1,275 shallow gas wells in CFB Suffield National Wildlife Area made its recommendations on the project in January 2009. There have been no decisions made by the Government since, and there are growing concerns that the project might be approved without fully accepting all of the recommendations made by the JRP. "It would be a huge setback for grasslands conservation in Canada if the Government allows this project to proceed, and even worse if it does so while rejecting any of the recommendations made by the JRP, as they recently did for the Mackenzie gas project in the Northwest Territories" says Alberta Wilderness Association's Cliff Wallis.

The coalition agrees with the Panel's findings that EnCana's project would likely result in significant adverse effects on species at risk and consequently interfere with the conservation of wildlife. As the Panel points out, avoiding such interference is a requirement of the *Wildlife Area Regulations*. The Suffield Coalition cautions that the Panel's conclusions should not be misread to limit "conservation of wildlife" to only protecting species at risk.

The Panel's conclusions that the EnCana project would negatively impact species at risk and therefore interfere with the conservation of wildlife must be read in the context of the Panel's broad recognition of the importance of the National Wildlife Area for the conservation of wildlife. "A narrow interpretation of the purpose of the *Canada Wildlife Act* and its *Regulations* is inappropriate for Suffield National Wildlife Area and could be detrimental to biodiversity conservation in Canada," says Carla Sbert from Nature Canada. "In addition to being havens for the growing list of species at risk (now numbering 602), National Wildlife Areas should help protect and conserve wildlife species so they do not become endangered" says Sbert. "This is not going to happen if industrial development is allowed within these areas."



In recognition that 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, the Suffield Coalition continues to call on the government to reject EnCana's proposed project to ensure Suffield National Wildlife Area, and other federal protected areas for wildlife, are not subject to industrial development and support broad goals for conservation of biodiversity.

For more information:

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The Suffield Coalition comprises seven groups: Alberta Wilderness Association, Federation of Alberta Naturalists, World Wildlife Fund Canada, Nature Saskatchewan, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment, Grasslands Naturalists, and Nature Canada.