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AWA Welcomes Premier-Designate Redford's Promise to Protect Alberta's Endangered Wildlife

Alberta Premier-designate Alison Redford committed during her campaign to suspend the public land sale known as "Potatogate" that would see 16,000 acres of native prairie converted to intensive irrigated agricultural use. Potatogate lands are known to provide crucial habitat for numerous species at risk, including burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk and long-billed curlew. "Albertans deserve to know that the species that call this province home today will still be here for generations to come," Redford wrote in a September 12, 2011 statement.

An e-mail from a campaign advisor on September 29 stated that she would suspend the native prairie land sale until the South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council presents its final report on the best use of that parcel.

"Alberta Wilderness Association congratulates Alison Redford on winning the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta on October 1," states Carolyn Campbell, AWA Conservation Specialist. "We look forward to supporting her actions as Premier on the important environmental policies in her campaign platform."

The September 29 e-mail also stated that Redford is aware of the critically endangered status of the sage-grouse and she believes that keeping it from extinction is vital. Only 13 male sage-grouse were counted in Alberta this spring, and their numbers have been declining for decades due to oil and gas extraction impacts in their remaining habitat in southeastern Alberta.

Redford also made important environmental commitments on her campaign website which have implications for endangered species habitat. These included:

[In Energy strategy:] "The main issue confronting us is the *environmental and social sustainability of hydrocarbon resources*. ... it is clear that the sector's growth rate has outpaced the government's regulatory and enforcement capacities... We need to attract the best and brightest to work in government. Excellence will ensure our legislation and regulations actually deliver on our intent. Still, attracting good people is not enough. We need to give them clear direction and the means to monitor and enforce our regulations."

"Our regulatory system will lead others by considering cumulative impact of resource development when approving each single project."

[In Agriculture policy:] "I will offer tax credits for habitat development."

"We look forward to working with Premier Redford and her Cabinet on a renewed commitment to ensuring Alberta's wildlife and wilderness are here for generations to come," says Campbell.

For more information:

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