



Release Date: January 6, 2014

Emergency Order Essential First Step in Sage-grouse Recovery

Sage-grouse recovery must remain focused on getting habitat right so the birds can recover. Postponing the Emergency Order for the Protection of the Greater Sage-grouse as requested by the City of Medicine Hat and LGX Oil and Gas Inc. would delay recovery and be counterproductive.

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) believes the Government of Canada has failed in its communication around the Emergency Order (EO) and is at risk of failing in its implementation as well. The Government of Canada needs to demonstrate its commitment to protecting sage-grouse by following through on the provisions set forth in the order, and ensuring there is adequate resourcing so those provisions can be fairly and effectively implemented.

AWA is concerned about the delays encountered in the process so far and urges the government not to waste any further time. "This is the slowest emergency I have ever seen." says Cliff Wallis, Vice-President of the Alberta Wilderness Association and one of the groups that went to court to force the Government of Canada to put in place the protection for Canada's most endangered bird. "While we understand the frustration over some provisions of the Emergency Order and the lack of clarity in its implementation, now is not the time to postpone that implementation. It has already been months since the order was announced and there has never been a bird more endangered in Canada in my lifetime."

Alberta Wilderness Association has also been working with local ranchers and energy companies in a *Sage-grouse Partnership* to improve communication among stakeholders and better coordinate recovery efforts.

AWA shares the concerns expressed by some ranchers in the partnership, and energy companies including the City of Medicine Hat Gas and LGX, about the way the EO is being implemented and communicated. Wallis says, "The Government of Canada has taken a unique and necessary first baby step with the Emergency Order but it needs to put appropriate resourcing behind it to ensure that existing commitments can be honored through compensation or payments for ecological goods and services provided by those whose lands are involved in greater sage-grouse recovery. The energy companies and ranchers are assisting with recovery efforts and we want to make sure they are not penalized for that."

"It is important for all those involved in sage-grouse recovery to stay focused on getting the habitat right so the birds can recover," says Wallis. "Postponing the Emergency Order would be counterproductive." AWA and other groups are assessing their options as to how they will support the Government of Canada in relation to the litigation by the City of Medicine Hat and LGX.

Only 14 male birds were counted in Alberta in 2013.

For more information:

Cliff Wallis, AWA Vice-President (403) 607-1970 (403) 283-2025

