



Dear Wilderness Defender,

**Sensitive Milk River Ridge Grasslands and Grizzlies
on the Plains Need Your Help**

In September 2013, we wrote informing you of that sensitive rough fescue and mixed grasslands on the Milk River Ridge are being opened up to exploration activity in the Alberta Bakken oil play. At that time, efforts to secure legal designation for these lands were being delayed until the Government of Alberta released its South Saskatchewan Region Plan (SSRP).

Your letters on this matter and about your ideas for the SSRP helped let our government know the level of importance the public places on sensitive grasslands. The message - *Albertans want grasslands protected* was heard. Your efforts helped secure a line on a map in the SSRP as a future conservation area. Regrettably, at the same time, the plan allows business to continue as usual until such lands are legally designated.

We hope you will take a moment to consider the dilemma of a plan and process that waits to designate conservation lands while allowing new developments in those areas that need protection most. We understand DeeThree Exploration who holds the exploration leases for this sensitive area plans to gain entry to these lands by summer 2015.

AWA has been working behind the scenes to secure protection. The time seems right to reinforce that work with your help. Letters and emails to the Premier asking that **the proposed addition to the Twin River Heritage Rangeland in the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan be put out of bounds to new oil and gas development immediately will help** (see the map at the bottom of this newsletter). You helped put this line on a map—now it's time to make that line meaningful with full legislated protection.

The letter AWA has written to the Premier and the Ministers is [posted here](#).

Send your letter/email to Premier@gov.ab.ca and your MLA.

Little Known Facts (LKF) about Milk River Ridge

Alberta's protected area targets have not been met in the Grasslands. Less

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AWA

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than 1% of the Foothills Fescue and Mixedgrass Natural Subregions have any legal protective designation.

The Northern Great Plains is a global priority for conservation as one of the World Wildlife Fund's Global 200 ecoregions.



Temperate grasslands are the biome most at risk in the world. Temperate grasslands birds are the most rapidly declining group of birds in North America.

Relatively undisturbed blocks of native grassland are few in Alberta. Much of the native grassland is fragmented or degraded. Although native grasslands are only about 5% of Alberta's land base, they support about half of the rare ecological communities, 40% of rare vascular plant species and 70% of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian species considered "at risk" or "may be at risk". The remaining large blocks of native grassland are extremely significant for biodiversity conservation and their protection is essential if we are to achieve protected area targets in Alberta.

Even rarer are grasslands where Grizzly Bears spend time out on the Plains and ranchers like Audrey Taylor and her family who hold grazing leases in this area and want to see these magnificent creatures and grassland jewels legally protected—Audrey and her family have been working hard to see that it happens here.



Your help will make a difference. Protecting these sensitive grasslands will help Alberta achieve its protection goals, meet the requirements of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and promote closer ties between the ranching and conservation communities.



Please send a copy of your letter to colson@abwild.ca as we will file your letter in the library at AWA.

Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action

If you wish to sign up for the Wilderness and Wildlife Defenders mailing list, please use the form on this page: www.albertawilderness.ca/Act-Now

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