



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

March 17, 2020

Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier of Alberta
Premier@gov.ab.ca

Honorable Jason Nixon,
Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks
AEP.Minister@gov.ab.ca

Re: Proposed Sale of Public Land-Golden Sunrise (SE 31-9-13-W4) in Taber, Alberta

Dear Premier Kenney and Minister Nixon,

For a number of weeks, AWA has been working with AEP Department staff to understand the rationale behind the decision made to sell the quarter section of public land, SE 31-9-13-W4, located near Taber. We are concerned with the decision making process involved and who and how the assessment was made that described this land as "very little multiple use value to the support Department programs e.g. grazing or wildlife habitat" (email correspondence to AWA from R. Simieritsch, 2020).

To the best of our ability we found this land consists of native prairie (classified as a Category 4 under the Native Prairie Vegetation Inventory), a threatened ecosystem in Alberta. The land also has a relatively large wetland or ephemeral water body. Native grasslands contribute significantly to carbon sequestration and drought resiliency, and in general, provide habitat for almost 75% of Alberta's species at risk. There has been no public consultation, and a complete lack of transparency surrounding this sale. As such, AWA believes that the offer to sell this land should be withdrawn.

It seems department officials may have failed to appropriately monitor, and protect the ecological integrity of this parcel from infringing agricultural activities. During the course of our research, AWA found that the southwest corner of this section was irrigated, and we have not received confirmation about whether there was permission given to irrigate this land. Whether or not permission was given, an investigation needs to be done into why such permission was given or, if not, why the transgression was not investigated and enforcement action taken. Irrigating native prairie is unacceptable, and changes the ecosystem significantly.

AWA understands there are times when the decision to sell a piece of public land may be coupled with the purchase of higher value public lands; however, there has been no indication by government that other lands will be purchased in place of the Taber parcel.

Despite the current rate of loss of native prairie in Alberta, the CLH auction site is actively promoting the sale of this land for agricultural conversion. Public land, like this parcel, should not be sold and converted for alternative uses. The provincial government should be proactively avoiding any further losses of native prairie landscapes. Indeed with less than 2% of Alberta's native prairie grasslands protected, we need this piece left as is under public land management.

The level of public engagement in the management of public lands has been an AWA concern for more than 50 years, and we believe that this proposed sale of public land in Taber illustrates the deficiencies within the current management framework that provide no transparency, hinder public participation, and enable an unacceptable standard for monitoring and managing public lands.

AWA respectfully requests that the offer to sell this land be withdrawn. We look forward to your timely response; the online auction is scheduled to begin on March 31, 2020.

Sincerely,
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nissa Petterson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nissa Petterson
Conservation Specialist

cc:
Rob Simieritsch,
ED Lands Coordination and Delivery South Branch/Lands Division
rob.simieritsch@gov.ab.ca