



Alberta Wilderness Association  
"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

September 26, 2022

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada  
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
By Email: [Steven.Guilbeault@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Steven.Guilbeault@parl.gc.ca)

**RE: Greater sage-grouse population decline**

Dear Minister Guilbeault,

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is writing to request further habitat protection measures to save Canada's endangered greater sage-grouse. The federal Emergency Protection Order (EPO) introduced in 2013 slowed their decline yet has proven insufficient to recover sage-grouse populations. Nationally, only an estimated 250 individuals remain, and Alberta counted just 22 males on leks in 2022. The population and range declined by 90% in the past decades, and have shown little to no signs of recovery.

Sage-grouse are an iconic prairie bird, best known for their elaborate mating displays. Importantly, sage-grouse are considered an indicator species for the sagebrush ecosystem, an ecosystem that supports over 350 species throughout the North American Great Plains. These landscapes, a part of Alberta and Saskatchewan's southern grasslands, are listed by ECCC as Priority Places for Species at Risk. The critically low sage-grouse populations, despite translocation efforts and captive breeding programs, indicates worsening conditions, and more must be done to address the health of the ecosystem.

The destruction of essential sage-grouse habitat persists outside the area of the EPO. Human development, including agriculture, oil and gas and infrastructure expansion, as well as rising interest in helium exploration and renewable energy, encroaches on the surviving sagebrush landscape. Protection of this habitat is vital to conserving sage-grouse populations and many other species at risk.

We ask your Ministry to extend the area covered under the EPO, to support a sustainable sage-grouse population. We also request ECCC strengthens support for policies and incentives to cease the loss of native prairie and valuable habitat, and to accelerate reclamation and habitat improvement.

A primer on events leading to the EPO, subsequent progress and ongoing threats to greater sage-grouse in Canada is in AWA's attached August 2022 article, "Greater Sage-grouse: A Symbol of the Prairies".

We look forward to your response to this urgent request at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Ruiping Luo  
Conservation Specialist

Cc: Michael Brewster, Director of Policy, Environment and Climate Change Canada Minister's office