



Trout Unlimited Canada

Suite 160, 6712 Fisher Street SE
Calgary, Alberta T2H 2A7
Attention: Jeff Surtees
CEO



Alberta Wilderness Association
455-12 St NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1Y9
Attention: Christyann Olson
Executive Director

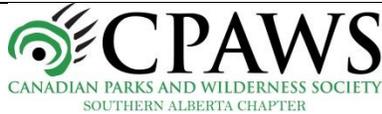
Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition



PO Box 2621
Pincher Creek, Alberta T0K 1W0
Attention: Carolyn Aspeslet
Executive Director



Yellowstone to Yukon
Conservation Initiative
200, 1240 Railway Ave
Canmore, Alberta, T1W 1P4
Attention: Wendy L. Francis
Program Director



88 Canada Olympic Road S.W.
Calgary, AB T3B 5R5
Attention: Katie Morrison
Conservation Director

September 22, 2014

The Honourable Minister Kyle Fawcett
Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
323 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

**Re: The status of Alberta ESRD actions to allow management and recovery of
bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout**

Dear Minister Fawcett,

Congratulations on your recent appointment to the position of Alberta's Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. We wish you the greatest success in this vitally important and challenging position.

This letter is sent to you jointly by the organizations set out above, all of who represent Albertans who are interested in the conservation of bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout in the province.

The Bull Trout Conservation Management Plan (March, 2012) and the Alberta Westslope Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan (March, 2013) have both been endorsed by your department. The conservation community is seeking information about progress towards ensuring, first, that these species, both designated “threatened”, are allowed to recover and, second, that your department is placing the requisite priority on habitat protection and restoration.

Specifically we would like an update on progress in the following areas, all part of the conservation and recovery plans for these two species:

1. Have cumulative effects assessments been completed in watersheds containing either or both of these native fish species and, if so, from the results of those examinations has your department set thresholds for linear disturbance (pipelines, roads, utility lines) and the amount of permissible watershed disturbance to guide decisions on future land uses and restoration efforts where the thresholds have been exceeded? If this work has begun, in which watersheds are cumulative effects assessments being undertaken?
2. Have habitat restoration plans been completed for those watersheds where information exists to suggest thresholds have been exceeded and the size of the disturbance footprint is expected to constrain recovery efforts? If these plans have been formulated, what watersheds do these plans include? How many habitat restoration projects have been completed or are in progress?
3. Protection of critical habitats is essential to recovery efforts. What progress has been made on mapping critical habitats for both species? Is this information available to the public, to conservation groups, to industrial proponents and to recreational users so better land use decisions can be made?
4. Both plans call for the designation of streams containing bull trout and/or cutthroat trout as “Class A” water bodies, under the *Water Act*. We have several questions related to this:
 - a. To date, how many streams have been classified (or reclassified) as Class A water bodies?
 - b. How many streams have pending Class A designation and when will this process be completed?

- c. How many potential Class A streams have pending, or existing land uses such as timber harvest, petroleum development and/or flood mitigation works proposed or present?
 - d. How is your department dealing with this to ensure the high level of habitat protection spoken to in the plans is achieved?
 - e. We assume that streams containing either or both species have been flagged appropriately to ensure a higher level of habitat protection occurs. Can you confirm this is the case?
5. Since timber harvest has been identified as contributing the largest land use footprint and potentially the most problematic one for species recovery, what progress has been made on these issues:
 - a. elimination of the “Green Zone Exemption” for stream crossings;
 - b. research and monitoring of the effect of logging on hydrologic response of watersheds containing these native fish species; and
 - c. substantive changes to the Timber Harvest Operating Ground Rules to exhibit better adherence to a high level of protection, less deviations and empirical evaluation of the efficacy of the Ground Rules to meet specified targets for habitat protection?
6. Sediment in excess of natural background levels has been identified as a serious threat to population recovery levels. What progress has been made on identifying sediment sources caused by roads, trails and other land use activities in watersheds occupied by these species? Specifically, what progress has been made to reduce the impact of recreational off highway vehicle trail networks and stream crossings? What remediation efforts are underway and where are these efforts located?
7. What efforts are underway or planned for the immediate future to increase population and habitat monitoring efforts for both species, to ensure the appropriate level of land use oversight and enforcement is occurring and that the intent of these plans is understood by everyone in your department and is transmitted to industrial and recreational users?

We very much look forward to a detailed and timely response to our questions.

Trout Unlimited Canada



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Jeff Surtees
CEO

Alberta Wilderness Association



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Executive Director

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Per: _____
Carolyn Aspeslet
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**Yellowstone to Yukon
Conservation Initiative**



Per: _____
Wendy L. Francis
Program Director

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society



Per: _____
Katie Morrison
Conservation Director

cc. Deputy Minister Bill Werry