



27 February 2014

The Honourable Steve Thomson
Minister of Forests, Lands and
Natural Resource Operations
PO Box 9352 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9M1
Via Email FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Thomson,

**Re: Bill 5 – Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Statutes
Amendment Act (2014)**

BC Nature members and clubs have long supported conservation of critical grasslands, through participation on land use planning committees and by making donations towards purchase of these lands for conservation.

This letter is to express BC Nature's deep concern over the Ministry's proposal to streamline the regulatory framework for rangelands under its proposed Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Statutes Amendment Act (2014). We are particularly concerned by your comment quoted in the Ministry's press release of February 13, that "*These legislative amendments are designed to streamline the regulatory framework for the natural resource sector and also provide improved business certainty for companies and individuals*" without, it seems, any regard for the environment.

We have two particular concerns:

- The extension of tenures for grazing up to terms of 25 years, as reported in the media. The existing shorter term tenures are preferable as they provides more flexibility to make adjustments for conservation purposes if required.
- The conservation of grasslands within parks and protected areas, where the main focus is conservation. We urge you not to extend the terms of grazing permits within parks and protected areas

We support the letter of February 21 sent to you by Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and The Nature Trust of BC (attached for ease of reference). In particular, we endorse the statement in the letter to you from these three organizations that they are "*adamant that the agriculture sector cannot be built up by expediting the industrial use of critical conservation properties*".

We urge the BC government to take the following steps:

- When mapping, identify all private conservation areas;
- Ensure that grazing does not take place on private conservation areas unless there is an agreement in place to allow it,
- Forward to the organizations with title to private conservation areas the relevant grazing fees paid to the government.

We look forward to hearing that these steps have been carried out.

Regards,



John Neville, President
BC Nature (Federation of British Columbia Naturalists)

CC.

Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment - ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca

Premier Christy Clark - premier@gov.bc.ca

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