



Prairie Grasslands and Species at Risk Protected Government Sets High Bar for Suffield National Wildlife Area

Calgary (November 30, 2012) –The seven-group Suffield Coalition today applauded the government’s decision to deny approval of Cenovus’ (previously EnCana) proposal to drill 1,275 natural gas wells and construct associated infrastructure in the Suffield National Wildlife Area (NWA). Suffield NWA was established in 2003 to protect endangered native prairie and the many species of animals and plants at risk in the area, including at least 15 federally listed species threatened with extinction.

The Government responded today to the January 2009 recommendations of the Joint Review Panel that conducted an environmental review of Cenovus’ proposed expansion. It agreed with the Panel’s conclusion that the proposed project would result in significant adverse effects on certain species at risk and would interfere with the conservation of wildlife. This decision sets a high bar for protecting the integrity of this unique area of fragile native prairie.

“We are greatly encouraged by this decision,” says Sandra Foss, past-president of Nature Alberta. The groups will now turn their efforts to addressing the many existing environmental issues within the NWA. “This decision reinforces the conservation value of Canada’s NWAs,” says Nature Canada’s manager of protected areas, Alex MacDonald, “and sets a great example of putting conservation first in the management of protected wild spaces.”

Because the NWA lies within Canadian Forces Base Suffield, the Department of Defense was delegated authority over the NWA when it was established under the Canada Wildlife Act. “The Government’s decision shows the Department is serious about its commitment to the protection of the NWA”, says Alberta Wilderness Association’s Cliff Wallis. “It is very good news for the species that rely on Suffield NWA and it also sets an excellent precedent about the Government’s commitment to preserving the integrity of other protected areas.”

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The Suffield Coalition comprises seven groups: Alberta Wilderness Association, Federation of Alberta Naturalists, World Wildlife Fund Canada, Nature Saskatchewan, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment, Grasslands Naturalists, and Nature Canada.