



December 9, 2014

World Heritage Centre, UNESCO
Attn: Ms. Petya Totcharova, Chief of Unit
Europe and North America Unit
7 Place Fontenoy, 75352, Paris 07 SP, France
P.Totcharova@unesco.org

Mikisew Cree First Nation
Attn: Steve Courtoreille, Chief
Attn: Melody Lepine, Director, Mikisew Cree First Nation
Government & Industry Relations
208 – 9715 Main Street
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Re: Petition by the Mikisew Cree First Nation to the World Heritage Committee Requesting Inclusion of Wood Buffalo National Park on the List of World Heritage in Danger

Dear Sirs/Mesdames,

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) appreciates the opportunity to write this letter of support to UNESCO for the Mikisew Cree First Nation's petition to the World Heritage Committee requesting inclusion of Wood Buffalo National Park on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

CPAWS is Canada's public voice for parks and wilderness. For over 50 years we have been instrumental in creating and managing Canada's parks and protected areas for the benefit of all Canadians. CPAWS adopts a science-based approach and collaborates with government, industry, and First Nations communities across Canada to gain greater protection for wilderness. Once lands are designated as protected, CPAWS works to ensure that management is undertaken with ecological integrity as the number one priority. In the national context, this is supported by the *Canada National Parks Act* (SC 2000, c. 32), which states:

Ecological integrity

8.(2) Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks.

The CPAWS Northern Alberta and CPAWS Northwest Territories chapters take particular interest in Wood Buffalo National Park ("Wood Buffalo NP"), which is Canada's largest national park, and which straddles the border between the province of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Wood Buffalo NP protects a large area of boreal forest and contains the largest freshwater boreal delta in the world – the Peace-Athabasca. Wood Buffalo NP is home to numerous migrating waterfowl, provides nesting habitat to the endangered Whooping Crane, and is the only place on earth where the predator-prey relationship between wolves and wood bison has continued unbroken over time. The park also provides habitat for the boreal woodland caribou, which is listed as "threatened" under Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SC 2002, c. 29).

CPAWS has a history of working to protect the integrity of Wood Buffalo NP's ecosystem. CPAWS successfully campaigned to have forestry activities removed in the park in the 1990s, and in the early 2000s worked side-by-side with the Mikisew Cree First Nation to stop the development of a road directly through the park.

CPAWS supports the Mikisew Cree First Nation's petition to the World Heritage Committee to place Wood Buffalo NP on the list of World Heritage in Danger. The development of the oil sands in northeastern Alberta over the last 20 years has had a significant impact on the health of the park's water cycle and ecosystem, and further oil sands development in the region is expected into the future. Oil sands development in the Athabasca, Cold Lake and Peace oil sands developments in the province have been linked to lower water levels in the Athabasca River and wetlands which feed and support the Peace-Athabasca delta, as well as air and water pollution. The placement of large hydro-electric dams along the Peace River in British Columbia has also impacted the delta through the regulation and reduction of water flow along the river. The massive Site C dam, which has been proposed in the province of British Columbia, will only add to the stress on the Peace River.

CPAWS believes that neither the federal government of Canada nor the provincial governments of British Columbia and Alberta are managing industrial activities in the region with the ecological integrity of Wood Buffalo NP in mind. CPAWS supports the Mikisew Cree First Nation's requests that a) a buffer be placed around Wood Buffalo NP, in which no industrial activities may take place; and b) government enact regulations to manage the destructive impacts of industrial development on the park's ecosystem.

Yours sincerely,



Eric Hebert-Daly
National Executive Director
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society



Alison Ronson
Executive Director
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society,
Northern Alberta



Kris Brekke
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Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society,
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cc: Mr. Tim Badman, Director, World Heritage Program, IUCN at tim.badman@iucn.org
Mr. Alan Latourelle, CEO, Parks Canada Agency at alan.latourelle@pc.gc.ca