



March 3, 2017

Honourable Shannon Phillips
Minister of Environment and Parks,
Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
208 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

RE: Castle Park and Castle Wildland Park Management Plan

Dear Minister Phillips,

As you may know, we have been watching with great interest the development of the Castle Park and Castle Wildland Park and accompanying management plan. On behalf of Alberta Beef Producers (ABP), we are pleased that the Alberta Government has recognized the value of cattle grazing for managing and enhancing the health of ecosystems as outlined in the Castle Park Draft Management Plan, and is committed to working with beef producers to develop a sustainable and long term livestock grazing plan to complement the park's conservation objectives.

ABP has been a strong supporter of environmental stewardship and conservation of sensitive lands and riparian areas for many years. We have seen how well managed grazing livestock can not only complement conservation, but also enhance the health of rangelands, riparian areas, and forests. For example, cattle can be used to curb forest and brush encroachment onto valuable native grasslands, while reducing built up fire hazards.

We are pleased to see the Government of Alberta's commitment in the Draft Management Plan that "Enhanced conservation and management of native grasslands will be achieved through sustainable grazing and range management practices" and to "continue grazing as a *primary* management tool to maintain native grasslands".

The recognition of the value of cattle grazing in the Castle is a testament to the hard work and capital that the local grazing permit holders have invested for continual improvement of the health and management of the rangelands. This is complemented by regular range assessments and development of range management plans paid for by the Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association which helps guide grazing plans and ensures cattle grazing has beneficial outcomes for the Castle environment.

We look forward to working with the Government of Alberta in developing the long term Livestock Grazing Management Strategy for the Castle Park as well as grazing plans for other public lands in the province. We appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate how best cattle grazing practices will help improve range and riparian health, natural biodiversity, healthy wildlife populations, and other ecosystem services. We also greatly appreciate the government's commitment to work with the



Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association, rangeland agronomists, local grazing disposition holders, and other organizations in developing the Livestock Grazing Management Plan, as well as sharing the costs of grazing management tools such as off-site watering systems, riparian fencing, salting sites, and other measures to ensure water quality is maintained and recreational- cattle interaction and conflict is minimized.

We think the development of the Livestock Grazing Management Plan is an excellent opportunity to showcase how a collaborative approach to livestock grazing within a park can help achieve the objectives of conservation and ensure a healthy functioning ecosystem. We have the opportunity to create a Livestock Grazing Management Plan that has the potential to be a model for other park grazing initiatives across Canada.

In conclusion, we thank the Government of Alberta for recognizing the importance of cattle grazing in managing rangelands and ensuring the long term health of this important ecosystem.

We will be drafting a more comprehensive assessment of the Castle Park Draft Management Plan, and will be submitting it with our recommendations in the public consultation period. In the meantime, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your key staff to discuss the Castle Park plan, as well as other environmental initiatives with respect to the beef industry. Our Government Relations manager, Tom Lynch-Staunton (toml-s@albertabeef.org), will work with your staff to arrange a meeting, hopefully within the next month.

Feel free to reach out anytime,

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Lowe", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bob Lowe
Chair
Alberta Beef Producers

Cc: Honourable Rachel Notley, Premier of Alberta
Honourable Oneil Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry