



Western Stock Growers' Association

Stockman's Centre, # 101, 2116 - 27 Avenue NE

Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7A6

Phone 403-250-9121 Fax 403-250-9122

wsga@shaw.ca

web site: www.wsga.ca

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A Market-Based Approach for Environmental Goods and Services

(Calgary, Alta – February 1, 2011) The Western Stock Growers' Association (WSGA), a voluntary organization representing the views of its livestock and landowner industry members, extends an invitation to the Alberta government to restart a valued pilot program exploring the use of market-based environmental goods and services.

In the spring of 2010, on the advice of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (the Honorable Mel Knight), the WSGA proposed that a small pilot program be implemented to study a market-based system which could provide rewards and compensation to private land managers and owners. The program was to target those who supply Environmental Goods and Services (EGS) such as agricultural producers - whose provisions benefit grizzly bear and elk habitat.

Section 23 of the recently passed Alberta Land Stewardship Act provides new tools for the support, research, and development of a market based approach for the objectives of the Act. The WSGA, in partnership with Sustainable Resource Development, had started to develop a market place for these important environmental services, but the pilot project did not move ahead. The concept of a market place for EGS has continued merit and the general public needs to be consulted as new land planning is developed and implemented.

Canadians have a desire for clean water, air and wildlife habitat, and as a result comes environmental public policy. The land management decisions of many rural land owners have a direct impact to these environmental services to our nation as a whole, but the responsibility tends to fall into the lap of the agricultural land owner.

“Ranchers have traditionally provided these important EGS services to Albertans for free. We now have a significant change in the way the public perceives wildlife and environmental habitat.” WSGA president Bill Hanson recently stated, “With the increase in wildlife numbers ranchers also experience an increase in problems.”

For example, ranchers in the Peace River area, hit hard by drought last summer, are now experiencing significant losses of expensive forage to both deer and elk. Many ranchers, in an effort to be low cost producers as well as reduce their carbon footprint, now incorporate swath grazing, bale grazing and stockpiled grass. Any forage that has not been protected by hauling into a wildlife proof central area is now being eaten by local wildlife. Even a low-cost livestock operation can experience as much as \$.70 per animal per day in extra costs by having to haul feed every day to livestock.

Ranchers, who have long been environmental stewards helping to maintain the sustainable environment everyone cherishes, require the ability to turn this issue with wildlife into an asset. Environmental goods and services can be developed into another profitable agricultural product. Western Stock Growers Association encourages the Alberta Government to restart the pilot EGS market place program.

For further information on Environmental Goods and Services please see the WSGA White Paper on Land Use Framework and SSRP March, 2010 document under “Industry News” by visiting www.wsga.ca

About the WSGA

Since 1896, the WSGA has supported a strong, free-market approach to the production and marketing of cattle in western Canada. While protecting the interests of the livestock producer by lobbying government through written submissions, briefs, and presentations on behalf of the cattle industry, the WSGA also promotes the enhancement and protection of the environment through sound range management practices. In addition, the WSGA has long supported the fundamental protection of Property Rights of the individual, which lead to responsibility for all other actions including protection of the environment.

For more information contact:

Bill Hanson
President
Western Stock Growers' Association
403-250-9121



Megan Oleksyn
southpaw communications
780-678-0559

