

Honourable Catherine McKenna

Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Minister Responsible for Parks Canada
200 Sacré-Coeur Boulevard
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
Sent via email to ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca

February 8, 2019

Dear Honourable Catherine McKenna:

Re: Potential oil & gas exploration within boundaries of Sable Island National Park Reserve

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) is deeply concerned about the possibility of oil and gas exploration occurring within the boundaries of Sable Island National Park Reserve. As the Minister responsible for Parks Canada, we look to you to ensure that NO oil and gas exploration activities are allowed to occur within ANY of Canada's national parks, including Sable Island.

In December 2018, the Canada – Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board (CNSOPB) issued a “Call for Bids” for oil and gas exploration that included Sable Island National Park Reserve. It is very troubling to witness one of Canada's national parks being treated in this way, potentially subjected to industrial scale activities. CNSOPB should NOT have the right to do this.

In reviewing the official “Call for Bids” document from CNSOPB, we are further troubled to see that the national park designation is not mentioned anywhere within this document. We are also concerned that the “Call for Bids” was launched by CNSOPB one day after Parks Canada concluded its public consultation for developing a management plan for Sable Island National Park Reserve.

Sable Island is a very special place, for Nova Scotians and for Canadians. This island, made entirely of sand, persists in the North Atlantic nearly 175 kilometres offshore. It is famous for its remote landscape and wild horses, but is important for many other reasons as well, including the presence of rare and endemic species, unique offshore terrestrial ecosystems, and a rich cultural history.

During the legislative process to establish Sable Island National Park Reserve, CPAWS called on the federal government to make several amendments to the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act to prohibit ALL oil and gas exploration and development activities from occurring within the national park reserve. This included prohibiting surface drilling, sub-surface drilling, and surface exploration activities such as seismic testing. Unfortunately, the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia, at that time, were only prepared to

prohibit surface drilling within the national park reserve and out to one nautical mile, so the threat of surface exploration and subsurface drilling within the national park reserve remains.

Canada's national parks are required to be managed for ecological integrity as the highest priority. This is the fundamental pillar for Parks Canada. Allowing oil and gas exploration to occur within Sable Island National Park Reserve would be grossly inconsistent with this requirement. We also note that the current Ministerial Mandate letter specifically prioritizes protecting Canada's national parks "by limiting development within them."

Please take the necessary steps to ensure that oil and gas exploration or development does NOT occur within Sable Island National Park Reserve. The CNSOPB process allows for amendments to be made "at any time up to ten (10) days prior to the closing date of 4:00 p.m. Atlantic Time, May 8, 2019." We encourage you to reach out to CNSOPB and ensure that the "Call for Bids" is amended to exclude Sable Island National Park Reserve entirely.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent and pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Alison Ronson

Interim National Executive Director,
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
aronson@cpaws.org



Chris Miller

Executive Director,
CPAWS Nova Scotia
cmiller@cpaws.org

cc: **Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia** at PREMIER@novascotia.ca
Stuart Pinks, CNSOPB at callforbids@snsopb.ns.ca

About CPAWS

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has been Canada's public voice for wilderness since 1963. In our 55+ year history, we have played a leadership role in the protection of over half a million square kilometers – an area bigger than Yukon Territory. We also work to ensure that existing parks and protected areas are effectively managed to conserve nature. The Nova Scotia chapter of CPAWS has a long and successful history of defending nature and has played a key role in the establishment of significant protected areas in Nova Scotia, including Sable Island National Park Reserve, Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, and expansions to the Nova Scotia system of protected areas.