

## Cannings & Cows: An Open Letter to M.P. Richard Cannings

The following was sent to M.P. Cannings in January 2018.  
We have received no acknowledgement or reply.

Tags: Okanagan National Park, cattle grazing in parks, lark sparrow, cryptogamic crusts, cryptogamic soils, osoyoos oxbows, okanagan river, mount kobau, testalinden creek

**To MP Richard Cannings  
From Boundary Alliance Org**

**Jan 2018**

Greatly disappointed by part of your recent opinion piece in the Grand Forks Gazette, "Park in Okanagan a Legacy".

[boundaryalliance.org](http://www.boundaryalliance.org) has long been a supporter of the National Park proposal and has published articles of support:

<http://www.boundaryalliance.org/nationalpark.pdf>

[http://www.boundaryalliance.org/scientists\\_parkdeclaration.pdf](http://www.boundaryalliance.org/scientists_parkdeclaration.pdf)

**Our support has been contingent on removal of cattle grazing in the Park, whether by outright purchase of lands, including crown grazing permits or by negotiated phase out.**

Your support for continued cattle grazing, and the precedent that would be established in a National Park is an unfortunate proposal that fails to promote willing seller, willing buyer discussions that would result in removal of the cow. More significant is that your support for continued cattle grazing ignores the role of cattle as "degradation agents" whose presence has greatly damaged grasslands and habitat, and continues to do so.

We might have expected, given your environmental interests, you would be well aware of the economic and environmental absurdity of cattle grazing on public land.

We were aware however of a cautionary note when we saw/heard your reported comment, prior to your election, that cattle grazing in the Okanagan benefitted some birds. In enquiring (to people better acquainted with your work) as to whether this might mean that you would support continued cattle grazing in a Park, respondents thought good sense would prevail, not cows.

It seems clear that desired habitat for some nesting bird is of more concern to you than the wide-ranging damage occurring, thanks to cattle grazing.

Some comment on the bird in question may be useful.

To quote from your own book, "Lark Sparrow, associated with bare earth between grass clumps and shrubs in grasslands, so may actually benefit from cattle grazing".

interestingly, the Audubon Society, perhaps better aware of cattle damage, describe the Lark Sparrow as "fairly common and widespread in the West....nesting in open country, bare ground, **overgrazed pastures**"

The “bare earth” preferred by the Lark Sparrow is frequently the direct result of cattle presence and the destruction of ecologically beneficial Cryptogamic soils and duff, reduced to dust by cattle. Our upcoming photo essay on biological soils, cattle effects on regrowth, will be published soon on our website.

Various Species at Risk guidelines in grasslands rightly call for improving the condition-of rangeland to provide tall healthy bunch-grasses to provide habitat for a wide variety of species, including the Lark Sparrow. This will not happen with cattle grazing.

**A partial list of problems associated with cattle grazing:**

grassland and riparian degradation

absurd water consumption raising low value crops

water contamination

cattle contribution to weed spread, cheat grass and other invasives.

public fencing costs

ecological-restoration costs (millions in public funds spent to repair damage, without removing the root cause, cattle)

lost opportunity costs

forest regrowth damage

conflicts with wildlife, habitat, food

growing awareness of cattle contribution to global warming.

All of these problems and more, have been included in numerous articles on our website. We provide direct links to several articles and recommend your attention to the other cattle related, water contamination articles on the site including articles/videos of specific cattle caused damage in the Boundary.

**CATTLE IMPACTS, GLOBAL AND LOCAL.**

[http://www.boundaryalliance.org/cattle\\_impacts.pdf](http://www.boundaryalliance.org/cattle_impacts.pdf)

**THE PROBLEM WITH RANGE CATTLE**

Why Government and Public support for cattle range use on Public Lands, should cease.

<http://www.boundaryalliance.org/rangecattleproblem.pdf>

**E. coli in Public Land Streams, Patterns related to Presence of Range Cattle. 2016**

<http://www.boundaryalliance.org/e.colireport2016.pdf>

**Cattle as an Invasive Species**

<http://www.boundaryalliance.org/invasives.pdf>

**Other recommended reading or viewing: Most problems also occur in BC.**

Book. **Waste of the West: Public Lands Ranching** by Lynn Jacobs

<http://wasteofthewest.info> where individual chapters are available as pdf files.

Book. **Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West**

a coffee table sized book, big pictures showing damage.

Book available from Amazon or <http://www.publiclandsranching.org>

At the website (see link 'Welfare Ranching') for individual chapters available as pdf files.

Various other articles on economic costs and environmental costs.

**Cowspiracy** video on netflix. Film covers many issues including the absurd ecological and economic costs of cattle industry.

other info at [cowspiracy.com](http://www.cowspiracy.com) includes an extensive list of sources used in the film. While film has been produced by those with a vegetarian bent, sources seem mostly credible.

Available at <http://www.cowspiracy.com/facts>

Re condos vs ranching and other myths, see:

**Waste of the West**, Chapter 11, *Justifications & Myths*

**Welfare Ranching**, Part 1, Ranching Myths, includes: "*Its Either Ranching or Subdivisions*"

#### **Other resources include:**

Our youtube HD drone videos in the Okanagan which include Mount Kobau & Testalinden, Osoyoos Oxbows, Okanagan River: What remains.

#### **Okanagan Collection**

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQYnXXOuH2gclQRDg2MyNoa7nKabNSO9Q>

#### **Kettle River Collection**

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQYnXXOuH2gfEz89h6nPxEzmzqhKQo3E>

#### **Boundary Alliance Collection**

Includes all [www.boundaryalliance.org](http://www.boundaryalliance.org) videos including Collections above

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQYnXXOuH2gdnIbolQeHk0q3R6-AwxB5x>

We would add that the Kobau video does not include many details on the extent to which cattle grazing has affected this area, particularly near the limited water sources. We also sampled water for E.coli at a seep heavily used by cattle, and found the sample so contaminated that it was "too high to count". Such a result would indicate probable E.coli counts beyond 30,000 CFU per 100ml.

Our report on that issue is still to come, in a 2017 update to our other E.coli articles together with reports of cattle contaminated streams in two Provincial Parks, Johnstone Creek and Gilpin Grasslands, and in Ingram Creek. At all of these locations public funds have provided various structures to address contamination issues, to no good end.

We note your presence as the sponsor of petitions both for and against the National Park. We do not buy your explanation for this as "being MP for everyone" Oliver Chronicle Dec 2017.

If you are as you state, in favor of the National Park, you are under no obligation to sponsor and therefore seemingly endorse, the misleading claims of the NO side. They have options of seeking sponsorship from some other MP or posting their petition on any of the various (free) petition platform providers.

We will close with comments from a UN Report on cattle costs and consequences. See more in our web article **Cattle Impacts, Global & Local** [http://www.boundaryalliance.org/cattle\\_impacts.pdf](http://www.boundaryalliance.org/cattle_impacts.pdf)

*“Livestock’s ( primarily cattle’s) contribution to environmental problems is on a massive scale. The impact is so significant that it needs to be addressed with urgency.*

- *The environmental impact per unit of livestock production must be cut in half, just to avoid increasing the level of damage beyond its present level.*
- *About 73% of rangelands in dry areas, have been degraded to some extent, mostly through overgrazing, compaction and erosion created by livestock action.*
- *Livestock sector is responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions measured in CO2 equivalent. This is a higher share than transport.*
- *Livestock now account for about 20% of the total terrestrial animal biomass, and the 30% of the earth’s land surface that they now pre-empt was once habitat for wildlife.*
- *While regulating scale, inputs, wastes and so on can help, a crucial element is the correct pricing of natural resources such as land, water and use of waste sinks. Most frequently natural resources are free or underpriced. which leads to overexploitation and pollution.*
- *A top priority is to achieve prices and fees that fully reflect the full economic and environmental costs, including all externalities. This list from: Report by Food & Agriculture Organization of the U.N. Livestock’s Long Shadow.”*

We look forward to hearing from you on this issue and we also extend an invitation to join us in a tour of some of the damage later this year.

With thanks, Al Grant for [www.boundaryalliance.org](http://www.boundaryalliance.org)

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