



Reference: 41307

June 25, 2024

VIA EMAIL: nsime@rdos.bc.ca

Mark Pendergraft, Board Chair
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
101 Martin Street
Penticton, British Columbia
V2A 5J9

Dear Mark Pendergraft:

Thank you for your email of March 13, 2024, to the Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, regarding the short-rayed alkali aster population at the Christie Memorial Park beach. As this topic falls under the purview of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, I have been asked to respond.

Short-rayed alkali aster is a federally endangered plant species in Canada. Christie Memorial Park has been federally identified as a critical habitat for this species since 2013 and contains the largest known population of short-rayed alkali aster in Canada.

Biologists from the Province and the Federal Government worked together with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) staff to develop best management practices for the site, based on the available scientific information that takes into consideration both species conservation and recreational use. These best management practices were incorporated into a voluntary stewardship agreement between the Province and RDOS from 2017 to 2021. As a result of these best management practices, the population increased from less than ten individuals to an estimated more than 10,000 individuals.

The Province has a role in establishing effective protection of federally identified critical habitat on non-federal lands within British Columbia (B.C.). Joint monitoring by provincial and federal biologists of this site and the surrounding area, last completed in 2018, suggests that the best management practices developed for the site support the effective protection of critical habitat for short-rayed alkali aster. Reducing the size of the footprint of this species within its critical habitat (i.e., destruction of critical habitat) could lead to the federal government considering an emergency order under Section 80 of the *Species at Risk Act*, due to an imminent threat to the survival and recovery of the largest population of this species in Canada.

Page 1 of 2

Staff within my Ministry continue to be available to work with RDOS staff to address critical habitat protection, while also considering the community's interests. Please contact Josie Symonds, A/Director, Resource Stewardship Operations at Josie.Symonds@gov.bc.ca if you would like to discuss this further.

Again, thank you for writing and sharing your concerns about short-rayed alkali aster.

Sincerely,



Lori Halls
Deputy Minister

pc: Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Josie Symonds, Acting Director, Resource Stewardship Operations