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National Wildlife Federation Launches Lawsuit to Protect America's Vanishing Grasslands

*EPA ignoring laws designed to protect fragile ecosystems from harmful agricultural
development*

Washington, D.C. – The National Wildlife Federation filed suit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in federal court in Washington, D.C. for failing to enforce laws that protect imperiled grasslands from destructive and unnecessary agricultural development.

The Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) created by Congress and implemented by the EPA requires transportation fuel sold in the United States to contain a certain amount of renewable fuel. In crafting the RFS, Congress clearly recognized the need to protect the less than 5 percent that remains of our nation's native grasslands by limiting biofuel feedstock production and harvesting to agricultural lands. The EPA, however, is flaunting this important provision by adopting an "aggregate compliance approach", which allows fragile and federally protected ecosystem like America's grasslands to be destroyed for biofuels production.

"Plowing up our nation's last remnants of native grasslands to grow more corn for ethanol is like burning the Mona Lisa for firewood," said Julie Sibbing, Director of Agriculture programs for the National Wildlife Federation. "We are shocked that the EPA would choose to ignore this statutory prohibition, further exposing grassland birds – the fastest declining group of birds in North America – to further habitat destruction."

Converting grasslands for biofuel production will create irreversible damage to this vanishing ecosystem. This delicate environmental network is already filled with declining species, like sage grouse and prairie chickens, which will vanish forever if the EPA continues to violate RFS protections. The National Wildlife Federation's goal in this lawsuit is to ensure that the federal renewable fuel requirements are met in a way that protects natural ecosystems from environmentally damaging conversion to agricultural land.

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