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New Alberta Caribou Committee Ready to Move Forward

By David Samson

The newly formed Alberta Caribou Committee (ACC) met in early November for its first annual general meeting, much of which focused on administrative aspects. A big issue they intend to attack immediately is that of the Little Smoky Woodland Caribou herd, which faces the immediate threat of extirpation.

"We will learn right away whether the government, industry, and ENGOs on the committee are truly committed to caribou recovery," says Cliff Wallis, committee member and AWA director. "Starting with the Little Smoky herd should provide a real litmus test of commitment."

Another thorny issue they will be addressing is wolf/prey control. This is not an approach that ENGOs are prepared to discuss without significant caribou habitat being identified as off-limits to industrial activity as well as a restoration plan being implemented for the most critical degraded habitats.

The terms of reference have almost been completed; however, the committee should be able to hit the ground running at its next meeting tentatively scheduled for December 22, 2005. Also, government representation is "right-sized," says Wallis, which should allow the committee's decisions to be the product of a balanced, cooperative effort among the committee members.

ENGO representatives are pushing for deferrals of any industrial activity in sensitive caribou habitat until such time as the committee has had an opportunity to produce its recommendations.

