



Release Date: April 10, 2006

Drilling Slated for Kakwa's Pristine Woodland Caribou Range

An application to construct a wellsite and access road in middle of the Narraway woodland caribou herd's range in the northern foothills has been submitted to Alberta Energy Utilities Board (EUB) by Petro-Canada. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is opposed to any new industrial activity in caribou range and is calling for a moratorium on new activity at least until the Alberta Caribou Committee (ACC) has completed its caribou recovery recommendations and range planning. AWA is filing an objection with Alberta Energy Utilities Board to the drilling application.

"What we are witnessing is only just the beginning of a wave of oil and gas exploration activity in this relatively pristine corner of Alberta," says David Samson, AWA Conservation Specialist. "The nearby Little Smoky woodland caribou herd is being decimated by cumulative industrial and human activity. The Narraway herd appears to be next in line."

The Narraway herd resides in the northern foothills in the Kakwa region, which includes the 650 km² Kakwa Wildland Park, northwest of Grande Cache and adjacent to the B.C border. Kakwa's complex array of natural features includes mountains, foothills, meadows, streams and rivers. In addition to elk, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, mule and white-tailed deer, grizzly and black bear, wolf, and lynx, the Kakwa is home to two separate woodland caribou herds.

The Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan 2004/05 reports that the Narraway herd is not monitored and its population status is unknown. The nearby Red Rock/Prairie Creek herd was considered stable at the time it was monitored; however, with increasing industrial activity, its status may have to be re-evaluated.

"The landscape team needs time to do its work for woodland caribou recovery in this area," says Cliff Wallis, AWA Board of Directors. "New industrial activity closes off our options for managing this highly threatened species."

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the environmental groups developed a set of tools under the Special Places program that would be useful to consider, including petroleum and natural gas lease extensions, buy-backs and trades in order to defer or stop industrial activity in important ecological sites.

"There is still lots of Alberta open for drilling for oil and gas but precious few places to protect our dwindling caribou herds," says Wallis. "Allowing this application to get this far demonstrates continuing failure by Alberta to protect caribou."

For more information:

David Samson, AWA Conservation Specialist: 403-283-2025
Cliff Wallis, AWA Board of Directors: 403-271-1408

