



## Media Release February 9, 2010

### Groups Seek Emergency Order to Stop Caribou Extirpation in Alberta Oilsands and Foothills

Alberta conservation groups are seeking an emergency order from Jim Prentice, Federal Environment Minister to enforce habitat protection for the endangered Foothills and Oil Sands woodland caribou herds. “Minister Prentice has recently acknowledged that there is a need for industry and the Alberta government to work with Ottawa to improve Canada’s environmental reputation. Alberta’s caribou desperately need Federal help, and this is Prentice’s chance to take meaningful action,” says Rocky Notnes with the Athabasca Bioregional Society.

In 2005 the groups asked for an emergency order and received no response. Five years later, and the situation for caribou is even more urgent. The first finalized government plan for the Foothills herds west of Edmonton provides no habitat protection. Killing wolves is the only thing stopping the Little Smoky herd from being extirpated. “This does not bode well for caribou in the oilsands area,” says Cliff Wallis, Vice-President, Alberta Wilderness Association. “The consensus recommendations from the Alberta Caribou Committee going into government did support limited habitat protection. This included support from CAPP and AFPA. However, after over a year of back room discussions between government and industry there is now no habitat protection. Clearly Alberta processes for caribou recovery have been corrupted. Without Federal intervention it seems there is no chance for caribou in Alberta and our international reputation is in further jeopardy.”

The Species at Risk Act has a section that requires the Federal Minister to recommend an emergency order to provide for the protection of a listed wildlife species if he or she is of the opinion that the species faces imminent threats to its survival or recovery. The Little Smoky caribou herd is considered at immediate risk of extirpation by the Alberta Government. A government committee concluded that the caribou herds in the oilsands region are expected to last only 20-40 years without an immediate change in the way industrial use of the area proceeds. The report specifically recommended the establishment of *large (thousands of square kilometres)* protected and restored areas for caribou.

The science shows that caribou cannot tolerate the intensity of industrial use the Alberta government is approving in their range. “This is clearly a case where a Federal Emergency Order is needed immediately because the Alberta Government is not being responsible, and the future of entire caribou herds, and Canada’s environmental reputation are at stake,” said Philip Penner, Executive Director with Nature Alberta.

See [www.albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/caribou/archive](http://www.albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/caribou/archive) for the full petition.

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