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Perfect Storm for Alberta's Caribou: Bill 29, Tar Sands, and Another Worthless Caribou Policy

A new Alberta Caribou 'policy', which does nothing to protect severely threatened woodland caribou, is one more nail in the coffin for this beleaguered species. An open-door policy on tar sands development, and proposed changes to protected areas legislation in *Bill 29* guarantee doom for woodland caribou in north-eastern Alberta.

"The draft policy guarantees that caribou are doomed, and caribou protection will never prevail in land-use decisions," says Cliff Wallis, AWA President. "Despite knowledge of critical caribou habitat, everything government has said or done shows they have no intention of protecting that habitat."

The renewed caribou policy, set for discussion on Thursday November 25 in Edmonton, avoids measures that would protect caribou habitat. "New development is allowed, new cutting is allowed, new roads are allowed," says Wallis. "Nothing is getting turned down except new protected areas for caribou and stronger legislation for protected areas. It's full speed on development and go slow on protection."

Despite an eight-year provincial caribou 'recovery' process, wildlife in Alberta continues to be at best an afterthought. Tar sands development has in the Premier's own words "no brakes' being applied. And AWA has reason to believe that one of the key drivers behind the revised parks legislation (the notorious Bill 29) is to weaken protection for caribou habitat in the tar sands area.

"It seems that Government and industry have now formally partnered to destroy caribou. Where industrial stakeholders rule, caribou have no chance of survival." Says Nigel Douglas, AWA's conservation specialist.

AWA challenges Premier Stelmach to immediately:

- Withdraw *Bill 29* and replace it with protected areas legislation that maintains protection found in current legislation and brings the law into the 21st century;
- Put a moratorium on new tar sands development until protected areas are established and land-use plans approved. Fifty percent of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan area should be protected (i.e. areas where no new industrial footprint would be allowed and existing footprint would be aggressively restored to protect caribou). [Click here](#) to see these areas, as identified in a conservation planning map by *Global Forest Watch Canada*.

"AWA is calling for Premier Stelmach and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers to commit to no new industrial development in existing protected areas in the tar sands," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA's conservation specialist. "The newly identified conservation areas in the Lower Athabasca must see existing leases withdrawn and renegotiated. The situation is desperate."

For more information:

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