

in Alberta occur in populations that are known to be declining.”

- “More provincial caribou populations are now in sustained population decline than was the case when the first edition of this status document was prepared in 2001.”

Of just three populations in Alberta *not* considered to be in decline, only one is stable. The other two - the Little Smoky and “possibly” the A La Peche herds - are “currently being kept stable, at reduced population levels, by means of a program to annually reduce wolf abundance.” If there is one caribou recovery action that the Alberta government is enthusiastic to undertake, it’s killing wolves. If only that enthusiasm was matched by a willingness to address the actual problem: unremitting industrialization of caribou habitat.

“Levels of habitat alteration from industrial developments are high on most caribou ranges in the province and projections forecast continued high levels of future industrial activity,” the status report continues. “Provincial land-use guidelines for industrial activities have not succeeded (as a sole tool) in providing for long-term caribou population and habitat conservation, and guidelines for caribou habitat protection currently are not being applied in all caribou ranges within the province.”

In one more bizarre twist in a sorry tale, according to the *Edmonton Journal*, the province’s own scientists on the Scientific Subcommittee (SSC) of the Endangered Species Conservation Committee (ESCC) recommended that the situation for caribou was so dire that their status should be upgraded from *threatened* to *endangered*. But the SSC advice was apparently overruled by the ESCC, a “multi-stakeholder” body including representatives from the Alberta Forest Products Association and Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers amongst others.

So the very industries which have continued to push our woodland caribou towards extirpation in Alberta get to veto any measures which might be introduced to limit their activities. And we wonder why Alberta has such a tarnished international reputation for its cosy relations with resource industries!

- Nigel Douglas

Caribou Betrayed Once Again by Government Inaction

It is now twenty-four years since woodland caribou were first designated as an endangered species in Alberta. So it would be reasonable to expect that they would be pretty well on the way to recovery by now: right?

Wrong. An updated status report released in 2010, shows that the future for the province’s caribou is now more dire than it has ever been: numbers continue to decline in the majority of the province’s herds, and the Alberta government has utterly failed to halt the decline, despite having all the knowledge it could possibly need to do so.

The *Status of the Woodland Caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Alberta: Update 2010* is quite clear about the inexorable decline in caribou populations:

- “Of the 13 populations with sufficient monitoring data, 10 are demonstrating population decline. The 10 caribou populations documented to be in decline occupy 83% of the total area of current caribou range in Alberta, and constitute the majority of caribou occurring in the province.”
- “Approximately 70% of all caribou