

## Canadians Willing To Make Sacrifices to Recover Caribou in our National Parks

Canadians support renewed efforts to recover *threatened* caribou in our Mountain National Parks – and we are willing to make sacrifices to allow that recovery to take place. This is one of the significant findings from a newly released Parks Canada report, *Conservation Strategy for Southern Mountain Caribou: What we Heard*.

In November 2011, a draft Conservation Strategy was released, and the Canadian public was invited to provide comments. Around 150 individuals and organizations obliged, and their responses are summarized in the new Parks Canada document. Notable findings include:

- 97 percent of respondents felt that caribou conservation was important.
- More than 90 percent of respondents supported seasonal trail closures and relocation of trails or campsites to limit recreational impacts in important caribou habitat.
- Nearly 85 percent of respondents support seasonal closure of secondary roads.

Canadians clearly feel that it is important to maintain endangered species in our National Parks, but what is particularly significant is that we understand this means we may need to make compromises that affect our own activities. And we are fine with that.

Woodland caribou of the Southern Mountain population are found in Banff, Jasper, Glacier and Mount Revelstoke National Parks, as well as in adjacent provincial lands. They are listed as *threatened* under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. But the fact that they live in National Parks does not necessarily mean they are safe or sufficiently protected. Banff National Park's caribou herd finally died off in 2009, the first extirpation of a large mammal in a Canadian National Park in more than a century. Two of Jasper's three caribou herds have experienced significant declines in recent years.

AWA hopes that Parks Canada will remember these findings when it decides whether or not to allow future developments, such as Jasper's planned expansion of the Marmot Basin ski hill into caribou range. Ecological integrity remains the priority of Canadians, even if that means restricting development.

- Nigel Douglas