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More Death in the Woods – Feds Delay Action on Caribou Again

On September 28, the Canadian government [informed](#) the Federal Court that it will again delay releasing its mandatory final boreal woodland caribou recovery strategy that is already five years overdue. The delay is particularly harmful for caribou populations in Alberta that face extinction due to habitat disturbance from intensive oilsands and other industrial activity.

Cliff Wallis, Vice-President of Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) and a member of the Alberta Caribou Committee that provides advice to the government, said: “Governments failing to act means more caribou death in the woods. Everyone knows what must be done to save the vanishing caribou — it’s time to get on with the job of protecting Alberta’s boreal and foothills forests.”

Prodded by a Federal Court direction in July 2012, the federal government set a tentative date for the final strategy’s release of September 30, which it will now miss.

Many of Alberta’s 12 boreal caribou herds are already struggling with low calf survival due to disturbed habitat. Only one population has enough intact habitat to be self-sustaining, yet new industrial developments continue to be approved in caribou ranges.

“Alberta caribou recovery is both biologically and technically feasible,” said Carolyn Campbell of AWA, “but it is urgent for governments to show responsibility and begin meaningful habitat protection for this iconic species.”

The draft recovery strategy was already four years overdue when it was finally released in August 2011 as a result of legal action taken by several First Nations (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Enoch Cree Nation) and by AWA and the Pembina Institute. The draft recovery strategy failed to identify the urgent habitat protection and restoration measures necessary to recover Alberta’s caribou. Instead it promoted predator control such as [wolf kills](#) as a band-aid approach to distract from oilsands, oil and gas and forestry-driven habitat loss.

The federal government’s boreal caribou scientific advisors [stated](#) in February 2012 that boreal caribou were likely to become more at risk under the draft recovery strategy, but that recovery of local populations is both biologically and technically feasible.

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