



**Release Date:** February 6, 2013

## **Stop Alberta Energy Leases in Threatened Little Smoky Caribou Range**

In violation of Alberta's 2011 woodland caribou policy that places an immediate priority on maintaining caribou habitat, Alberta Energy plans auctions of new oil and gas leases within the Little Smoky caribou range on February 7, March 7 and April 25, 2013. This herd's habitat is already 95% disturbed, according to Environment Canada. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) has issued an open letter to Alberta's Energy Minister urging him to defer these lease sales as a step towards responsible habitat management for this herd at imminent risk of local extinction.

"Despite Alberta's caribou policy, and despite horizontal drilling technology that could consolidate new exploration and production on a reduced footprint, the Alberta government keeps issuing leases and approving new facilities, roads and well sites in the Little Smoky range, including in the 5% that was formerly intact," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist.

The letter notes that because of increasing habitat loss from leases and ensuing disturbance, Alberta's department of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development resorts to a massive wolf kill in the Little Smoky range, shooting and poisoning over 650 area wolves from 2005-2012, and issues hundreds of moose hunting permits each year.

"To keep scapegoating other wildlife, ignoring technological approaches to avoid surface disturbance, and exacerbating the root cause of caribou decline is completely out of balance, and unethical," Campbell states in the letter. "Minister Hughes, the fate of this caribou herd rests with your decision to defer new leasing and disturbance until enough habitat can be restored to recover these populations."

Attachment: Open Letter to Alberta Energy Minister Ken Hughes, including map of new energy leases posted for sale in the Little Smoky caribou range

**For more information:**

Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, (403) 921-9519 (cell)





**ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION**

*"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"*

February 6, 2013

Hon. Ken Hughes  
Minister of Energy, Government of Alberta  
#404 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6  
Sent via e-mail: [Minister.energy@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Minister.energy@gov.ab.ca)

## **An Open Letter to Alberta's Energy Minister**

### **Request to Defer Selling of New Energy Tenures within Threatened Little Smoky Caribou Range**

Dear Minister Hughes:

I am writing to urge your department not to issue new petroleum and natural gas dispositions involving any new surface access and disturbance within the Little Smoky caribou herd range. In particular, please do not proceed with planned auctions of new leases within the Little Smoky on February 7, March 7 and April 25, 2013.

On January 31, 2013 an Alberta Energy spokesperson was reported in the Edmonton Journal as stating that "infrastructure takes up less than one-half of one per cent of the land within the range of the Smoky Lake herd". This shows a troubling ignorance of linear disturbance effects on caribou generally and of their exceedingly high levels in this area. 95% of the range of the Little Smoky caribou population was documented as disturbed in Environment Canada's 2011 and 2012 (draft and final) woodland caribou recovery strategy documents. This herd requires at least 65% undisturbed habitat to be self sustaining, as noted in the final federal recovery strategy.

Despite the 2011 Alberta woodland caribou policy, and despite horizontal drilling technology that could consolidate new exploration and production on a reduced footprint, the Alberta government has continued to issue leases and approve new surface disturbance, facilities, roads and well sites, including in the 5% that was formerly intact. This violates the Alberta Government's 2011 woodland caribou policy that states the immediate priority is maintenance of habitat, followed by habitat restoration. New disturbance must be deferred and habitat restored in the Little Smoky range for responsible management of this threatened species.

Existing project-level operating guidelines by ESRD are woefully inadequate to address cumulative impacts of industry's footprint, and have been recognized as such by the Alberta government and industry via Alberta Caribou Committee work. The Alberta government's July 2010 woodland caribou status report stated that "current project-level land-use guidelines for industrial activities on caribou range in northern Alberta were demonstrated to be ineffective as a sole tool, in terms of providing for long-term caribou conservation." (p. 68) There is overwhelming scientific consensus that the root cause of this woodland caribou herd's decline is habitat fragmentation and loss from human disturbance.

Because of Alberta Energy's past unfettered mineral rights dispositions and ensuing habitat disturbance, ESRD resorts to a massive wolf kill in the Little Smoky range, shooting and poisoning over 650 area wolves from 2005-2012, and issues hundreds of moose hunting permits each year. To keep scapegoating other wildlife, ignoring technological approaches to avoid surface disturbance, and exacerbating the root cause of caribou decline is completely out of balance, and unethical.

Minister Hughes, the fate of this caribou herd rests with your decision to defer new leasing and disturbance until enough habitat can be restored to recover these populations. Please take the first step by postponing these auctions of new dispositions in the Little Smoky caribou range.

Sincerely,

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION



Carolyn Campbell, Conservation Specialist

cc:

Hon. Diana McQueen, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Jim Ellis, Deputy Minister, Alberta Energy

Attachment: Map of posted dispositions for sale in Little Smoky caribou range

Link to January 31, 2013 Edmonton Journal article cited above:

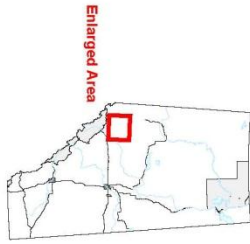
<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/technology/Pending+leases+threaten+caribou+Alberta+Wilderness+Association+says/7901418/story.html>

# Little Smoky Caribou Policy Boundary -- Caribou Range --

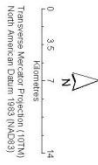
Caribou Range - 2011 Caribou Policy  
(Aligns with boundaries in the  
National Recovery Strategy)

## DOE Agree Type

- AGREEMENTS ISSUED 2013 JAN
- POSTINGS 2013 FEB
- POSTINGS 2013 MARCH/APRIL



Enlarged Area



Topographic Map Data (1:75,000)  
North American Datum 1983 (NAD83)

**SOURCE INFORMATION:**  
Caribou Range: 2011 Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta -  
Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development  
Caribou Range Restioider, Alberta Energy  
Mineral Ownership Alberta Energy  
Base Map Data Provided by Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd.

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