



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

April 19, 2013

Parks Canada Caribou
Jasper National Park
P.O. Box 10
Jasper, AB T0E 1E0

Via E-mail: caribou@pc.gc.ca

AWA Comments on Jasper National Park Winter Recreational Access for Caribou Conservation

Dear Parks Canada:

Please consider these comments submitted by Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) as part of the public consultation regarding Parks Canada's proposal for Jasper National Park Winter Recreational Access for Caribou Conservation.

Alberta Wilderness Association, founded in 1965, is a province-wide conservation organization with 7,000 members and supporters in Alberta and around the world. AWA promotes awareness and protection of Alberta's wild lands, wildlife and wild waters.

AWA is very supportive of the proposal to restrict winter recreational access in the ranges of the A La Peche and Brazeau caribou populations from November through February, and to extend closure in parts of the Tonquin range an additional two weeks to the end of February.

Some of these caribou populations are at very high risk of extirpation, and it is urgent to act to reduce the threats driving their population declines. In a national park, we must do all we can to reduce human-caused predation on caribou, which are important indicators of healthy alpine landscapes. With only six animals counted in Maligne and twelve in Brazeau during the autumn 2012 survey, strong actions to reduce predator access are urgently needed.

Although Tonquin and A La Peche herd numbers are higher than Maligne and Brazeau herds, their situation remains vulnerable. Summer 2012 research findings of fairly high wolf predation rates for the Tonquin herd add urgency to extending the winter trail closures. The proposed North Boundary closure will be an important benefit to the A La Peche herd.

Albertans and visitors to Alberta have many opportunities for excellent winter recreation experiences outside the last of our viable woodland caribou ranges in west central Alberta. We are confident that, with good information, responsible park users will be most willing to make other recreational choices. Ongoing education by Parks Canada about the risks to caribou from winter roads, trails and other human impacts will be very important. We strongly encourage Parks Canada to communicate consistently and clearly to Park users and the general public about the scientific evidence motivating these road and trail closure periods.

Parks Canada should take further steps to reduce facilitated predator access and habitat disturbance beyond the currently proposed measures. We strongly urge Parks Canada to close winter road and trail access into the Maligne Valley area to benefit the Maligne population, and to prevent expansion of downhill ski access in caribou range by the Marmot Basin ski operation.

We also strongly urge Parks Canada to work with provincial government and industry partners to reduce roads and access in the portions of these caribou ranges that extend outside national parks.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a thick black line.

Carolyn Campbell
Conservation Specialist