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Alberta Defers New Energy Leasing in Two Caribou Herd Ranges

For the first time, Alberta is deferring the sale of new mineral rights across the entire range of two of its fifteen caribou herds until Cabinet first adopts range plans describing how critical habitat will be protected to recover those two populations. In a letter yesterday to Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA), Alberta Energy Minister Ken Hughes stated that effective immediately, new mineral rights sales will be halted across the Little Smoky and A La Peche herd ranges northeast of Jasper National Park until range plans are approved in 2014. AWA welcomes this decision by the Redford government as a good first step in the survival chances of these two caribou herds.

“We greatly appreciate the Redford government’s leadership in taking a step that previous Alberta governments have not taken, to stop adding new lease pressures to these caribou when they are already far past the levels they can tolerate,” says Carolyn Campbell, conservation specialist at Alberta Wilderness Association. “This is an important first step in maintaining habitat necessary for these two herds’ survival. We look forward to additional positive steps by government and industry as we work towards restoring caribou populations and their ranges in Alberta.”

The federal government’s boreal woodland caribou strategy, finalized in October 2012, mandates that provinces will develop range plans for woodland caribou survival. Caribou range plans will describe how critical habitat will be protected to attain a minimum of 65% undisturbed habitat over time, and provide a range-specific path forward for the recovery of that caribou population.

Industrial disturbance of caribou habitat is recognized as the underlying driver of steep declines in Alberta’s caribou populations. The Little Smoky range currently has less than 5% undisturbed habitat. This rights sale deferral decision affects two of the fifteen Alberta caribou populations on provincial lands.

For more information:

Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association (403) 283-2025

Attachments below:

- May 2, 2013 letter from Alberta Energy Minister Ken Hughes to Alberta Wilderness Association
- Map of Alberta caribou population ranges and names (Government of Alberta, 2010)





*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary-West*

MAY 02 2013

AR14179

Ms. Carolyn Campbell
Conservation Specialist
Alberta Wilderness Association
455 - 12 Street NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1Y9

Dear Ms. Campbell,

I am writing to notify you that I have placed a temporary hold on the sale of new Crown mineral rights in the Little Smoky and A la Peche caribou ranges. This hold is effective May 1, 2013 and applies to these ranges only.

The temporary hold will allow our government to begin the essential work of developing comprehensive range plans in these two important areas as part of the Federal Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou in Alberta.

The temporary hold will be in place until the Little Smoky and A la Peche range plans are approved by Cabinet which is expected in 2014. The development of those plans is being led by my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

I trust that you will agree this is another significant step in ensuring responsible resource development in this province.

Sincerely,

Ken Hughes
Minister of Energy

cc: Honourable Diana McQueen
Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Honourable Robin Campbell, MLA West Yellowhead

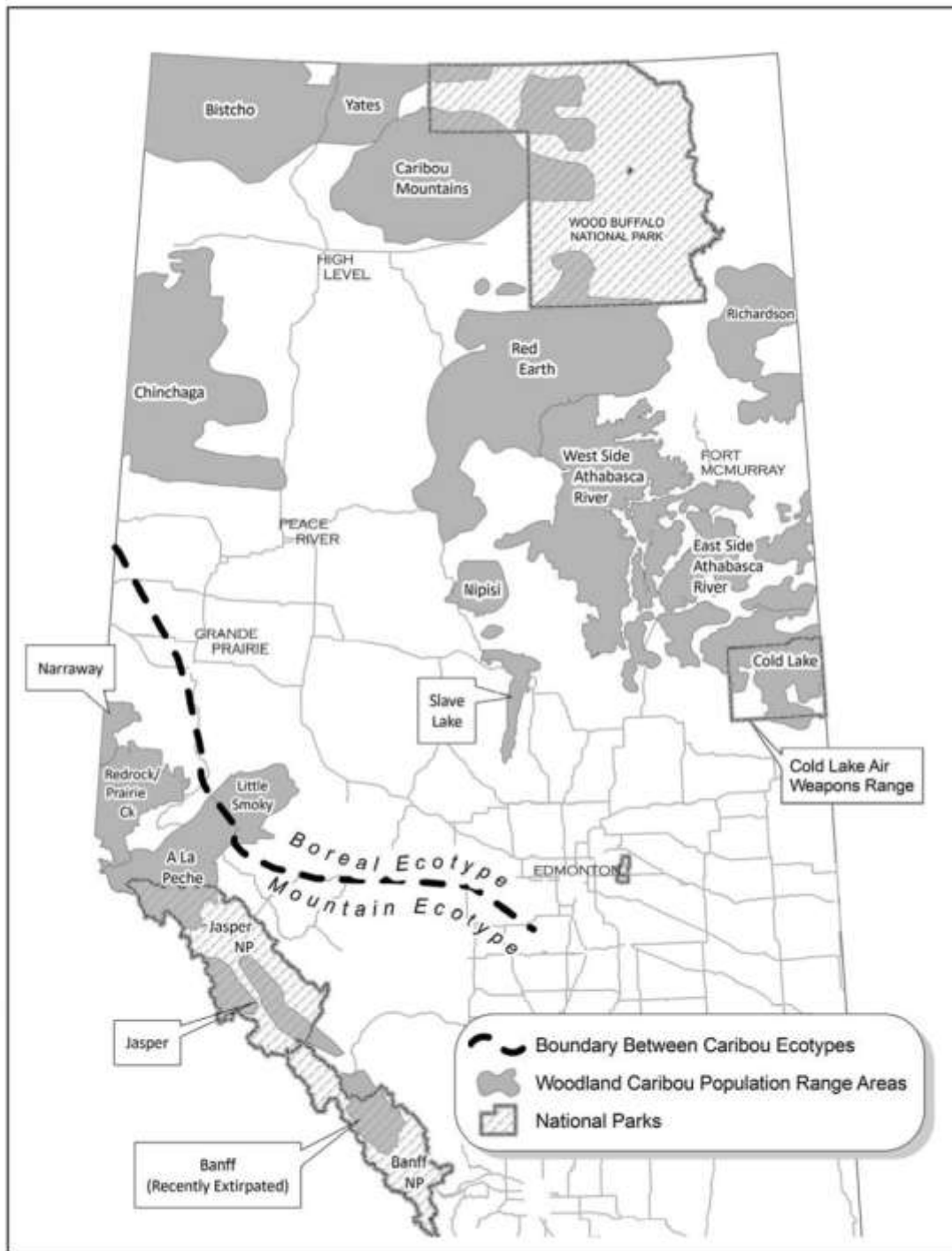


Figure 2. Woodland caribou population names and approximate current range areas in Alberta.

Source: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Alberta Conservation Association. 2010. Status of the Woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Alberta: Update 2010. p. 3.