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## **Alberta Defers Logging in Ranges of Threatened Woodland Caribou**

Following up on their May decision to defer the sale of mineral leases in the Little Smoky ranges of the Woodland Caribou, the Government of Alberta recently extended the deferral to include forestry activities in the same area.

As reported in the *Hinton Parklander* article of July 8, 2013, the logging deferral will exclude logging from 35 percent of the forest management agreement (FMA) area held by ANC Timber, Ltd. (also known as Alberta Newsprint Company). This area is about 100km north of Hinton, and overlaps with the ranges of the Little Smoky and the A La Peche woodland caribou herds. The woodland caribou is a threatened species in Alberta, with only an estimated 78 and 135 animals remaining in those two herds.

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) applauds the Government of Alberta for taking this action. "This is a significant step that will help protect caribou habitat," says Sean Nichols, Conservation Specialist with AWA. "Forestry-related disturbance continues to be a very considerable source of habitat loss for the Little Smoky and A La Peche caribou populations. We have asked those responsible within the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to implement forestry deferrals, and would like to thank them for following through."

AWA does note, however, that many more steps need to be taken to ensure the recovery of these herds. There are several other companies with FMA holdings in the critical habitat (habitat that is needed for survival) of these herds. Companies such as Canadian Forest Products Ltd. and West Fraser Mills Ltd. are signatories to the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement in 2010, but have not yet met a CBFA commitment to protect woodland caribou. While AWA is encouraged to see government action to ensure habitat protection for caribou in Alberta, we again ask all Alberta forest companies to be responsible and stop logging in Alberta critical caribou habitat until sustainable populations are attained.

While AWA is not aware of any time limit on the logging deferral, it is expected to remain in place at least until range plans for the woodland caribou are approved in 2014. Caribou range plans, mandated in the federal government's October 2012 boreal woodland caribou strategy, will describe how critical habitat will be protected to attain a minimum of 65% undisturbed habitat over time.

Of the 18 herds identified in the Alberta Caribou Recovery plan, one has died out, two are at "immediate risk of extirpation," the populations of six are declining, six are unknown, and just three are reported stable.

### **For more information:**

Sean Nichols, Alberta Wilderness Association (403) 283-2025

### **Attachments:**

A map of the Little Smoky area showing caribou ranges and FMA areas:

<http://albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/caribou/archive/2013-07-11-map-showing-fma-areas-in-little-smoky-a-la-peche-caribou-ranges>

