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Alberta Forestry Decimating Endangered West Central Caribou Habitat Despite Viable Alternatives

Extensive logging is occurring within and adjacent to two endangered west central Alberta caribou ranges, counter to extensive evidence that forest re-growth, not new harvesting, is required for caribou recovery. These caribou populations, the Little Smoky and A La Peche, are the focus of Alberta's upcoming caribou range plans, the first plans Alberta will provide as required under the federal caribou recovery strategy.

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) calls on the Alberta government to develop meaningful, enforceable rules to re-allocate forestry outside west central caribou habitat, and uphold Alberta's own Cabinet-approved caribou recovery policy as well as federal law.

"Caribou desperately need the Alberta government's upcoming caribou range plans to actually reverse habitat loss by locating new logging outside ranges," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. "Will the Prentice government preside over Alberta caribou extinction, or will it choose solutions for caribou that can also work for industry?"

Significant forestry activity is possible outside caribou ranges in west central Alberta, while steadily recovering caribou habitat. AWA's analysis suggests that a broad regional agreement to share wood fibre quotas across west-central Alberta would enable logging to stop in caribou range and buffer areas, yet would reduce total regional forestry cuts by only 15-20%. This type of agreement would greatly assist the main in-range quota holders Alberta Newsprint Company, its parent company West Fraser, and Foothills Forest Products to absorb a fair but not crippling share of cut reduction.

A large forest harvest deceleration is coming soon, to adjust from mountain pine beetle surge cuts. While caribou still persist, the deceleration is needed now, fairly distributed outside caribou range to ensure minimal impact to forestry communities. Comprehensive habitat restoration that energy companies could finance under a 'pay-to-stay in endangered species habitat' program could support many forestry silviculture jobs, further cushioning impacts on municipalities. [AWA reported October 10](#) that an area the size of Prince Edward Island was auctioned for new oil and gas leases within Alberta caribou ranges since the 2012 federal caribou recovery strategy, and more is planned in the weeks to come, without any rules in place to reduce total industry footprint inside caribou range.

Premier Prentice pledged during his leadership candidacy: "Under my leadership, we will establish Alberta as a world leader in the advancement of conservation and the protection of the environment." AWA looks forward to Alberta's upcoming range plans for the Little Smoky and A La Peche caribou to fulfill that pledge by requiring total habitat disturbance levels to fall.

Forestry and energy footprint in caribou ranges stimulates deer, moose, and predator populations, robbing the caribou of their ability to minimize overlap with predators. Provincial scientists assessed Alberta woodland caribou as 'endangered' in 2010, though the province has not yet updated their listing from 'threatened'. Caribou recovery is both technically and biologically feasible, according to scientists.

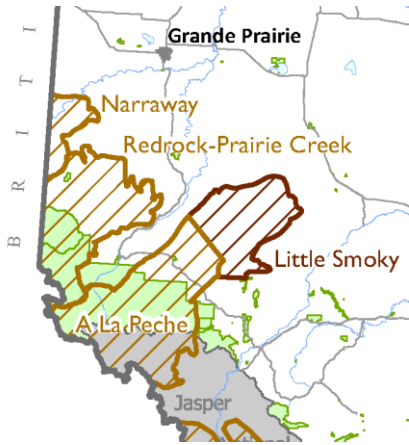
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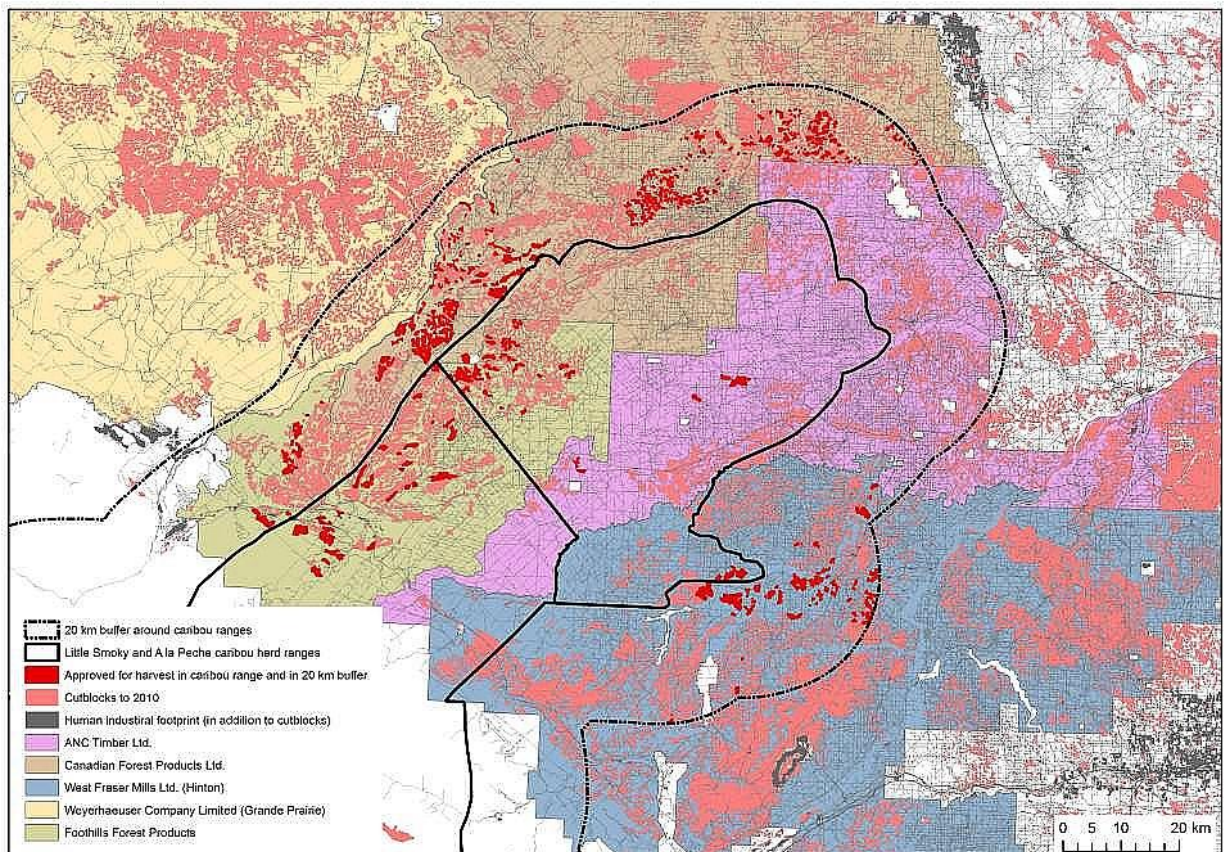




Maps and Photos of recent Logging in Little Smoky-A La Peche Endangered Caribou Ranges, Sites of Alberta's Forthcoming First Caribou Range Plans



**Cutblocks to 2010, and Approved for Harvest:
Little Smoky Range, and A La Peche Winter Range plus 20 Km Buffer Zone**



Source: Global Forest Watch Canada (June 2014). *State of Alberta Forests: With A Focus on the Eastern Slopes.*





Current Logging Activity in A La Peche Endangered Caribou Range, September 29, 2014

