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Brisk Alberta Energy Lease Sales in Endangered Caribou Habitat Continue During Election: Who Will Sustainably Manage Alberta's Forests and Wildlife?

On April 29, in the midst of an election, the Alberta government plans another major auction of new oil and gas leases on 35,600 hectares (356 km²) of endangered mountain and boreal woodland caribou habitat, without rules to reduce surface disturbance below current excessive levels. Since September 2014 the Prentice government has auctioned over 1600 km² of Alberta caribou ranges for oil and gas leases. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) asks all Alberta's political party leaders to commit to defer energy lease sales in endangered caribou ranges until effective rules to protect the herds are in place.

"Energy lease sales must stop until today's ineffective caribou guidelines are replaced with credible disturbance reduction rules," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. "Rather than showing environmental leadership, Alberta continues to violate its own caribou policy and the federal *Species at Risk Act* mandate to protect and restore caribou habitat. Caribou will soon disappear without strong habitat protection. Energy resources can be extracted with a greatly reduced footprint compatible with caribou."

Scientists have stated that recovery of these caribou is technically and biologically possible. Excessive human disturbance within caribou range stimulates populations of deer, moose and the wolves that prey on them. Seismic lines, pipelines and roads that fragment older forests and wetlands provide predators with easy access to caribou, resulting in higher predation than caribou can tolerate.

On March 6, 2015, the Alberta government postponed a major auction of new oil and gas leases on 200 km² of Redrock Prairie Creek mountain woodland caribou range, which AWA praised. But on April 29, more leasing (131 hectares) is planned in that same range. Auctions in large areas of several northeast Alberta caribou ranges are also planned on April 29.

Under today's guidelines, new lease sales promote more new seismic lines, well sites and roads and make survival chances even worse for these caribou. Alberta's focus on aerial gunning and poisoning of wolves to try to stabilize the Little Smoky caribou population, while allowing ongoing habitat loss from industrial activities, has recently attracted widespread criticism.

Under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*, Alberta must develop range plans outlining how habitat will be maintained and restored to at least a 65% undisturbed level. Completion of the first two range plans, for the Little Smoky and A La Peche ranges in west central Alberta, has been delayed several times.

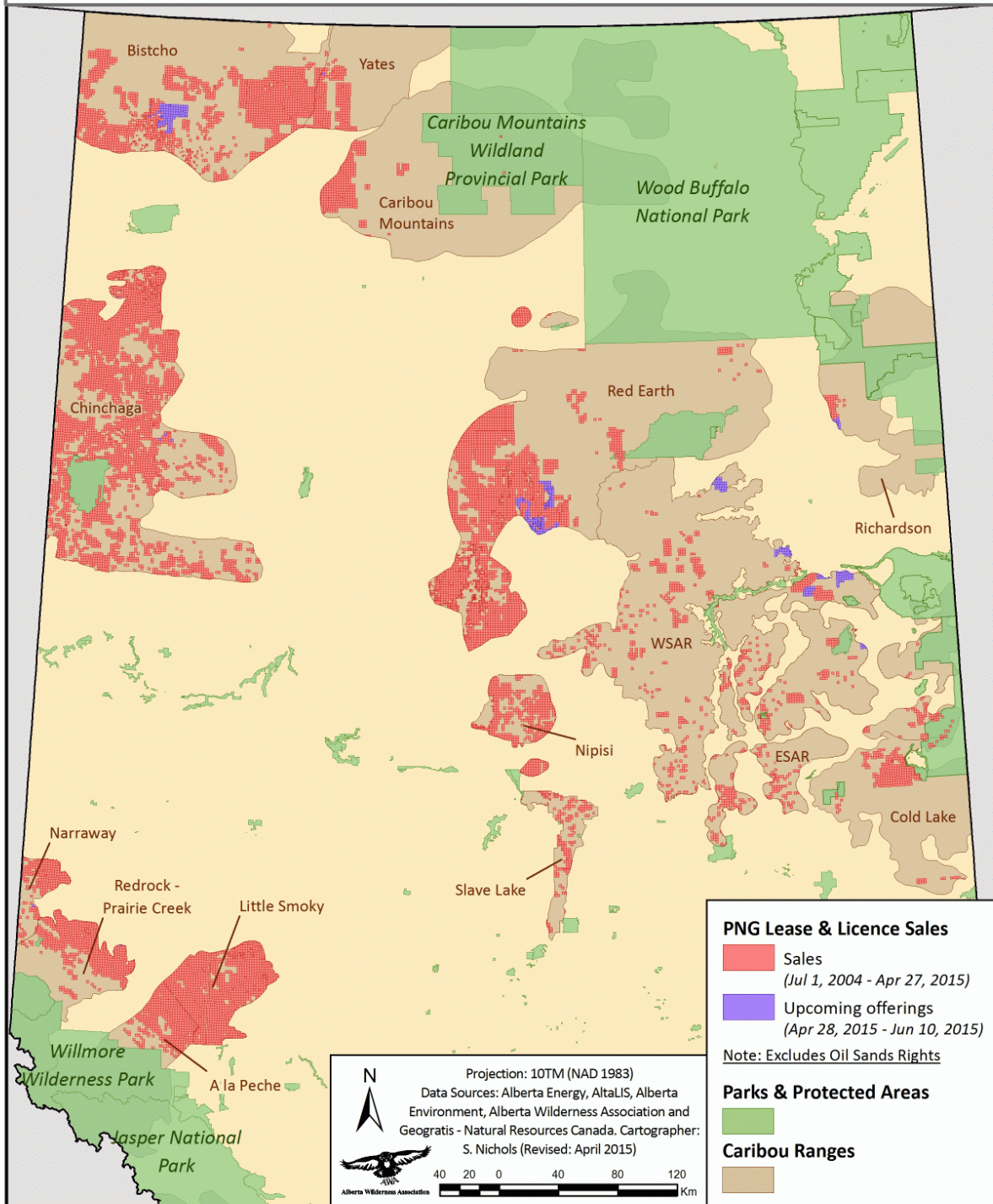
For more information: Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, (403) 283-2025

**Attachments - Two Maps of Recent and Planned Auctions by Caribou Range;
Table of Recent and Planned Auctions; Table of Habitat Disturbance and Population Data**



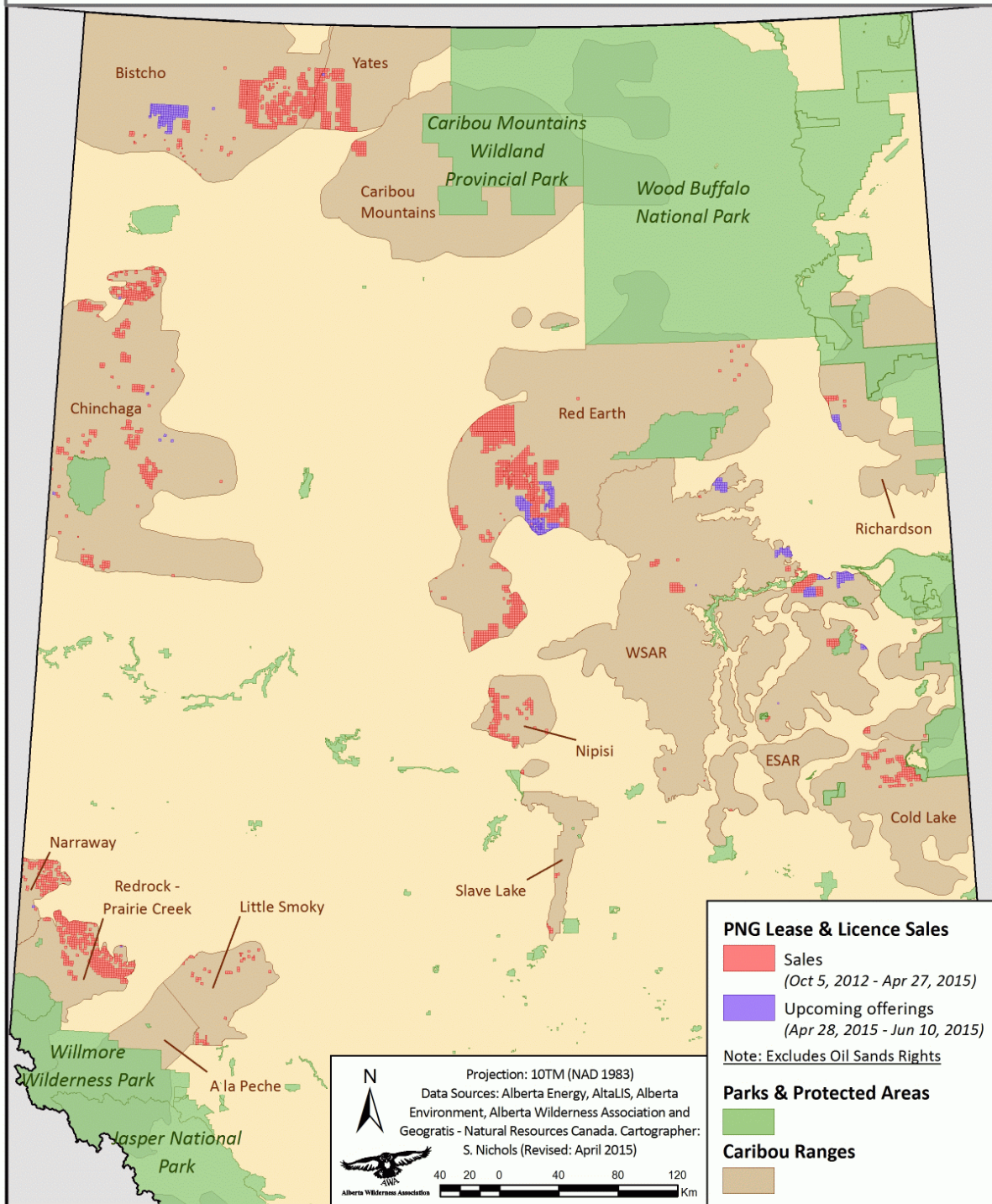


Alberta Oil and Gas (PNG) New Lease-Licence Sales in Caribou Ranges since Jul. 1, 2004 Alberta Caribou Recovery Plan





Alberta Oil and Gas (PNG) New Lease-Licence Sales in Caribou Ranges since Oct. 5, 2012 Federal Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy





Alberta New Oil-Gas Lease-License Sales (excludes Oil Sands Rights) within Caribou Ranges since Alberta Caribou Recovery Plan 2004, and Upcoming for April 29, 2015

AB Caribou Population	Auctioned since AB recovery plan start, July 1, 2004 to Oct 4, 2012 (surface area, ha)	Auctioned since Federal boreal recovery strategy, Oct 5, 2012 to Sep 14, 2014 (surface area, ha)	Auctioned since Prentice government, Sep 15, 2014 to April 27, 2015 (surface area, ha)	Auctions Planned on April 29, 2015 (surface area, ha)
A La Peche	106,126	0 ¹	0 ¹	0 ¹
Narraway	46,572	26,098	1,286	0
Jasper (within Ntl. Park)	0	0	0	0
Redrock-Prairie Creek	109,903	39,528	41,156	131
Total AB Mountain Caribou	262,602	65,626	42,442	131
Bistcho	330,667	111,189	8,879	0
Caribou Mountains	71,505	8,383	0	0
Chinchaga	837,096	98,013	1,869	265
Cold Lake	34,640	27,199	529	0
East Side of Athabasca River	118,990	452	20,675	6,616
Little Smoky	279,658 ⁴	9,816 ¹	0 ¹	0 ¹
Nipisi	93,693	22,124	5,771	0
Red Earth	455,282	131,800	83,687	25,040
Richardson	7,007	532	3,029	3,293
Slave Lake	35,427	2,162	0	0
West Side of Athabasca River	104,155	8,753	1,674	0
Yates	11,071	63,007	0	263
Total AB Boreal Caribou	2,379,192	483,429	126,112	35,477
Total Alberta Caribou	2,641,794	549,055	168,554	35,607

Source: Alberta Energy.

1. New Lease-license sales deferred as of May 1, 2013 until range plans are approved by Alberta Cabinet.





Alberta Caribou Range Disturbance Levels and Population Estimates

AB Caribou Population	Total Disturbed Habitat %	Estimated Pop'n. (2009 or otherwise noted)	Estimated Cumulative Population Change, 1994-2012⁴
A La Peche	n/a	88 ³	-56%
Narraway	81% ¹	96 ³	-36%
Jasper (within National Park)	n/a	51 ³	n/a
Redrock-Prairie Creek	48% ¹	127 ³	-80%
Total AB Mountain Caribou		362³	
Bistcho	71% ²	195	-58%
Caribou Mountains	57% ²	315-394	-76%
Chinchaga	76% ²	250	-70%
Cold Lake	85% ²	150	-87% in AB
East Side of Athabasca River	81% ²	90-150	-78%
Little Smoky	95% ²	78	-33%
Nipisi	68% ²	55	n/a
Red Earth	62% ²	172-206	-84%
Richardson	82% ²	150	-5%
Slave Lake	80% ²	65	n/a
West Side of Athabasca River	69% ²	204-272	-71%
Yates	61% ²	350	0.5%
Total AB Boreal Caribou		2,074-2,315	
Total Alberta Caribou			

1. Estimated by Global Forest Watch Canada using 2010 human footprint data.
2. Reported 2011 by Environment Canada.
3. Population estimates for 2012, extrapolated by Environment Canada from 2009 estimates.
4. Population rate estimates in Hervieux et al. (2013). *Widespread declines in woodland caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou) continue in Alberta*. Can. J. Zool.

Note: The federal boreal woodland caribou recovery strategy requires provinces to develop range plans outlining how at least 65% **undisturbed** habitat will be achieved and maintained over time in that range.

