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## **Protected Areas over Paddocks for Alberta's Endangered Caribou**

On December 17, the Alberta government issued a [request](#) to build a fenced compound in the west central Little Smoky woodland caribou range, for captive female caribou to have calves. These calves will be released as yearlings into habitat that is becoming even more degraded by new energy-related disturbances and by logging. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) believes that the Alberta government must act swiftly on its promises to apply strict operating limits on new surface disturbance in caribou ranges, and to establish extensive northwest Alberta protected areas, instead of relying on artificial predator controls.

"The Alberta government's commitments to restore seismic lines and establish protected areas were positive announcements in June 2016," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA Conservation Specialist. "Effectively implementing these commitments must now take priority over building caribou zoos. The expense and effort of an 'initially restored' seismic line can still be wasted by a new disturbance allowed right over it, or nearby, and the important high profile promises of protected areas need to be followed by actions."

Intensive energy and forestry footprint in caribou ranges stimulates deer, moose and predator populations beyond what caribou can tolerate. A pilot program to restore 70 linear kilometres of legacy seismic lines was announced by the Alberta government in October 2016 for the Little Smoky - A La Peche caribou range lands. However, a strict, transparent plan for linear features and access is still needed, to ensure that areas near or within 'initially restored' lines remain free of future disturbance.

AWA believes clear in-range surface disturbance limits are essential to fulfill Alberta's commitment to achieve self-sustaining caribou populations. Surface disturbance limits may mean that the energy industry will need to share existing infrastructure and pool leases, and the forest industry will need to share tenure outside of caribou range.

AWA praised the government's November 2016 decision to allow energy companies to defer drilling in caribou ranges and has requested information on the actual impact to caribou from this voluntary deferral program.

New protected areas promised in June 2016 for four northwest Alberta caribou ranges would bring Alberta much closer to achieving woodland caribou recovery strategy requirements in those ranges, as mandated under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. AWA believes that clear surface disturbance limits inside and outside these protected areas, compatible with caribou recovery, will still be necessary. Alberta's deadline to complete plans that effectively protect caribou habitat is October 2017.

### **For more information:**

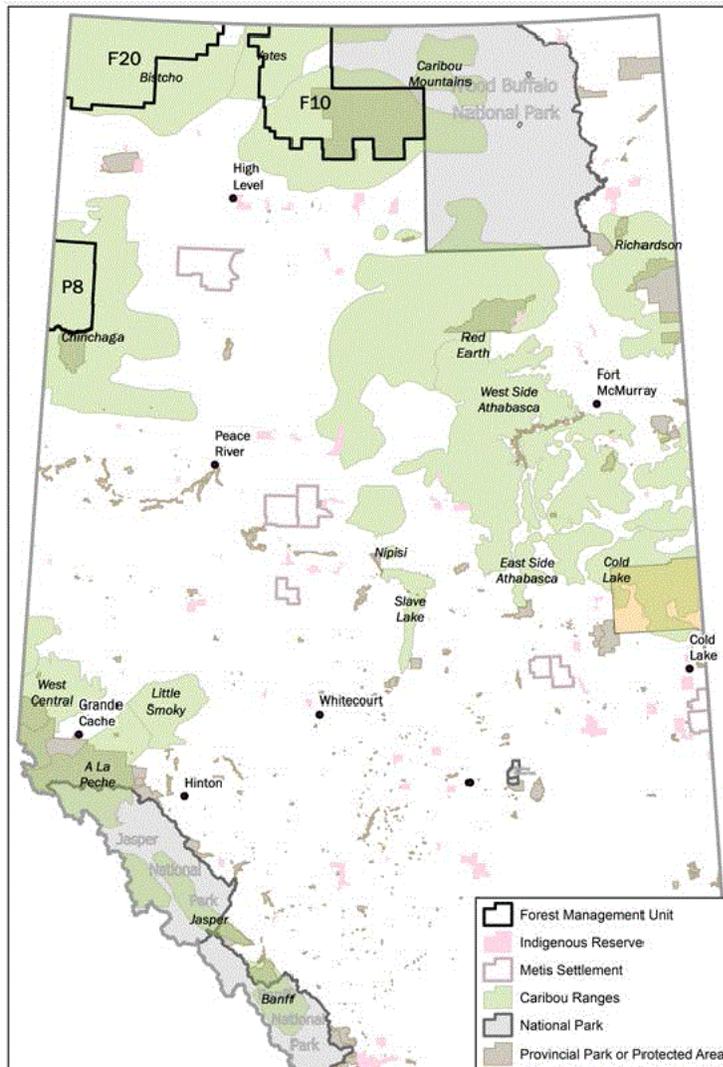
Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, (403) 283-2025

**Attachment:** Alberta government June 2016 commitment to northwest Alberta caribou protected areas, including map





**Alberta government June 2016 commitment to northwest Alberta caribou protected areas**



Protected Areas Opportunities map: “Map showing provincial caribou ranges. My report focuses on the Little Smoky, A La Peche, Chinchaga, Bistcho, Yates, Caribou Mountains and Red Earth ranges. The highlighted forest management units represent areas where strong protection opportunities exist.” - E. Denhoff, *Setting Alberta on the Path to Caribou Recovery*, May 30, 2016, Figure 1, page 3.

“The Alberta government has accepted Mr. Denhoff’s recommendations ... Key highlights of the mediator’s recommendations include: ... Providing permanent protection to an additional 1.8 million hectares of caribou range in the Chinchaga, Bistcho, Yates and Caribou Mountains ranges, for a grand total of 4.9 million hectares provincially.” – Government of Alberta news release, June 8, 2016

