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Room for Both Jobs and Caribou in Canada's Forests: New Report

Three-province study highlights examples of how and where resource extraction and caribou habitat protection can go hand-in-hand

Caribou conservation and industrial activity aren't always mutually exclusive, according to a report released today by the David Suzuki Foundation, Alberta Wilderness Association and Ontario Nature. The report, *Room for Both: Realizing a future with sustainable economies and healthy caribou populations*, synthesizes three studies focused on boreal caribou in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario.

Coming at a time when much of the discourse surrounding caribou recovery initiatives is deeply polarized, the report aims to reset the stage for conversations and decision-making about caribou conservation. It highlights examples of where there is room for both caribou conservation and industrial resource extraction activity and calls for a more level, science-based discourse, better economic models and recognition of the potential employment value of forest restoration.

Boreal caribou are threatened with extinction from coast to coast to coast, their populations continuing to decline since the federal *Species at Risk Act* was introduced in 2002. The 2012 federal boreal caribou recovery strategy directed provinces and territories to manage caribou range disturbances to ensure that caribou have at least a 60 per cent probability of persistence (by maintaining or restoring caribou ranges to a minimum of 65 per cent undisturbed habitat).

To date, few examples of land-use planning have incorporated both economically viable timber harvest levels and effective caribou protection measures. The federal government has not yet used a safety net order (a tool within *SARA*) to protect the animals but is in the midst of a judicial review regarding its failure to do so.

"This work demonstrates that there are constructive solutions for communities, forests and wildlife," said Carolyn Campbell of Alberta Wilderness Association. "If we start with the shared goals of caribou recovery and community economic activity, we can build optimized least-cost habitat solutions that work for caribou and communities."

"I've been working to advance Caribou recovery for almost 20 years," said Rachel Plotkin, boreal campaign manager at the David Suzuki foundation. "For me, it has never been about jobs versus the environment. Rather it has been about trying to ensure that limits are set within our management of industrial activities so that wildlife has the space it needs to survive and recover."

The report also finds that effective caribou habitat restoration can help advance reconciliation with, and economic opportunities for, Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

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The David Suzuki Foundation (davidsuzuki.org) is a leading Canadian environmental non-profit organization, collaborating with all people in Canada, including government and business, to conserve the environment and find solutions that will create a sustainable Canada through evidence-based research, public engagement and policy work. The Foundation operates in English and French, with offices in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

Dedicated to the conservation of wilderness and the completion of a protected areas network, Alberta Wilderness Association is a voice for the environment. Since 1965, AWA has inspired communities to care for Alberta's wild spaces through awareness and action.