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Caribou: Alberta-Canada Draft Agreement

The governments of Alberta and Canada recently released a draft agreement on timelines and actions to develop woodland caribou recovery plans. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) supports much of the agreement but remains very concerned that interim habitat protection is needed for Alberta and Canada to follow through.

“AWA welcomes the Canada-Alberta caribou agreement for public review. It includes many positive, specific habitat intentions,” says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. “A serious flaw, however, is the absence of interim habitat protection to motivate governments to comply. The agreement also lacks a funding commitment, and omits a target decade by which Alberta will achieve and maintain at least the minimum habitat requirements for self-sustaining caribou.”

Completing and funding legislatively binding plans for the habitat measures outlined in this draft agreement would be a great step forward, not only for Alberta’s endangered¹ caribou, but for Alberta’s threatened native fish and other valued wildlife that rely on intact or older forests.

Past Alberta caribou declarations have not led to actions. Despite the Alberta government’s approval of the 2005 Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan and 2011 Caribou Policy, extensive caribou habitat loss continued. Not a single Alberta caribou range plan has been finished to reduce cumulative land disturbance from energy and forestry industries, to achieve minimum caribou habitat needs.

AWA believes that this agreement in no way substitutes for the federal Environment Minister’s and federal government’s responsibilities to protect critical habitat under s. 61 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Caribou urgently need interim, measured federal orders on unprotected provincial lands. These interim measures would hold Alberta accountable to complete and fund overdue, legally enforceable range habitat plans to achieve self-sustaining caribou. These measures would achieve self-sustaining wild caribou in healthy forests, rather than caribou in increasingly fragmented forests, relying for survival on fenced pens or on the current horrific mass wolf culls.

AWA also supports the recently released Canada-Cold Lake First Nations draft conservation agreement as a step to support indigenous capacity and leadership on woodland caribou recovery.

Public comments on the Canada-Alberta draft agreement are due by September 7 to [Canada](#), and by October 6 to [Alberta](#). Public comments on the [Canada-Cold Lake First Nations draft agreement](#) are due September 8 to Canada.

For more information:

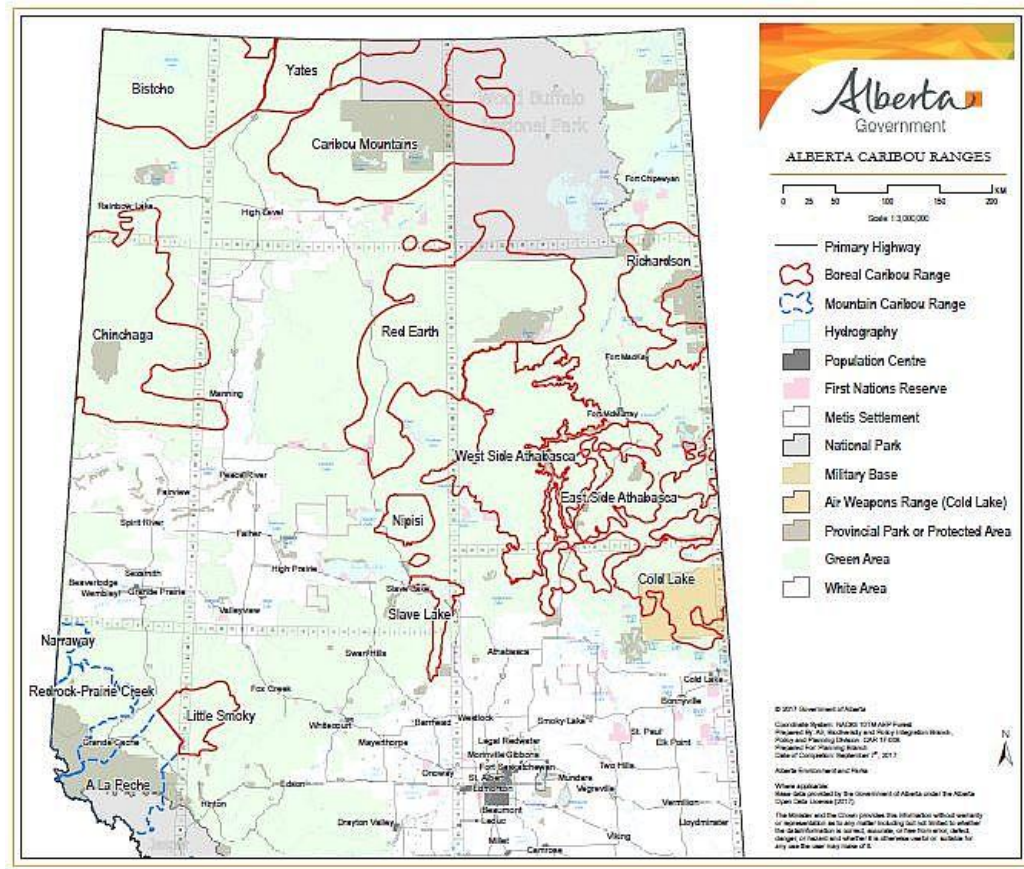
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¹ In December 2010, scientific advisors to the Alberta government assessed Alberta’s woodland caribou as ‘endangered’. In May 2014, scientific advisors (COSEWIC) of the federal government assessed Alberta’s mountain woodland caribou as ‘endangered’. Legal designations have not been updated to reflect these assessments.





Map: Woodland Caribou Ranges on Alberta Public Lands.



Source: Government of Alberta, November 2017.

