

Southern Mountain Caribou B.C. Decisions

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Endangered Mountain Caribou © P. Sutherland

Last week the B.C. government decided further public discussion is needed on a draft mountain caribou Partnership Agreement with Canada, Sauteau First Nations and West Moberly First Nations. At the same time, it deferred some new industrial disturbance in zones identified in the Partnership Agreement. The B.C. government also agreed to sign a broader 'conservation agreement' on mountain caribou planning with the federal government. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is very concerned that overdue caribou habitat measures and a positive framework for indigenous-provincial collaborative leadership are now in jeopardy.

"For many years, industries and governments have delayed habitat actions to support these endangered caribou populations," says Carolyn Campbell. "We hope that the positive collaborative principles found in the Partnership Agreement can be approved soon, and extended to other ranges, so urgent habitat actions to recover these caribou and the older intact forests they rely upon will proceed."

The Partnership Agreement outlined significant coordinated actions to recover several endangered southern mountain caribou populations adjacent to some of Alberta's own endangered mountain caribou ranges. As the draft Partnership Agreement rightly states, "Time is of the essence" to stabilize and recover wild caribou and the habitat they need to be self-sustaining. AWA supports B.C.'s deferral of new resource development applications in some Partnership Agreement zones, to buy time for further planning and conservation areas.

The bilateral B.C.-federal conservation agreement describes future "Conservation and Recovery Measures" with the long-term goal to reach self-sustaining populations. Unfortunately such intentions and timelines are highly vulnerable to cancellation. AWA believes that broader deferral of new disturbance is needed, to spur timely completion of collaborative range-specific plans that target at least the minimum habitat disturbance requirements of caribou.

The recent [Room for Both](#) report, released by David Suzuki Foundation, Alberta Wilderness Association and Ontario Nature, calls for a more level, science-based discourse, better economic models and recognition of the potential employment value of forest restoration.

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