

Alberta Caribou Habitat Solutions Urgent on Eve of Federal Deadline

October 26, 2018



On the eve of a deadline for a federal update on woodland caribou habitat protection, and a major caribou scientific conference, Alberta is still without plans to reach minimum habitat requirements for its threatened woodland caribou populations. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) strongly urges the Alberta government to adopt the solutions that have been identified to both recover caribou and provide community economic benefits.

“Recent federal government findings – an ‘imminent threat’ to the recovery of endangered southern mountain caribou, and no effective protection for much of the boreal caribou critical habitat in Alberta - should create tremendous urgency,” says Carolyn Campbell, AWA Conservation Specialist. “Instead, caribou continue to lose critical habitat from industrial activities, when solutions

are within reach.”

In March 2018, Alberta’s Environment Minister announced they were “suspending” consideration of potential Northwest protected areas until socio-economic impacts could be determined. Earlier this week, AWA, David Suzuki Foundation and Harmony Foundation released a [report](#) by natural resource economist Dr. Tom Power that found that:

- managing lands for woodland caribou recovery can grow the economy in the Bistcho-Yates caribou range lands of northwest Alberta; and
- for all caribou ranges, we can start with shared goals of caribou recovery and community economic activity to find ‘most benefit and least cost’ solutions.

A six-month federal update to the public on at-risk species protection, as required by law, is due October 31. In the previous April 30, 2018 report, the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change found that the laws of the Province of Alberta do not provide effective protection of caribou critical habitat, and that outside of protected areas, provinces and territories have failed to protect almost all of boreal caribou critical habitat.

“We ask Alberta to stop expanding the industrial footprint in excessively fragmented caribou ranges until legally binding plans are adopted that outline how ranges will be managed over time to achieve self-sustaining caribou populations,” said Campbell. “We call on the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change to fulfill her duties under SARA by issuing interim critical habitat protection orders, at least in Alberta’s most critically affected mountain and boreal caribou ranges, pending the adoption of conservation agreements and range plans.”

Because of years of intensive industrial activities that have fragmented or cleared older forests, Alberta has some of the most highly disturbed caribou ranges in Canada. Its overall caribou population is estimated to be falling by 50% every eight years. Alberta has spent decades in research and planning processes, but has yet to produce range plans that would adequately protect habitat.

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Download the [Oct. 2018 restoration economy fact sheet](#)

Download the [main report](#)



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