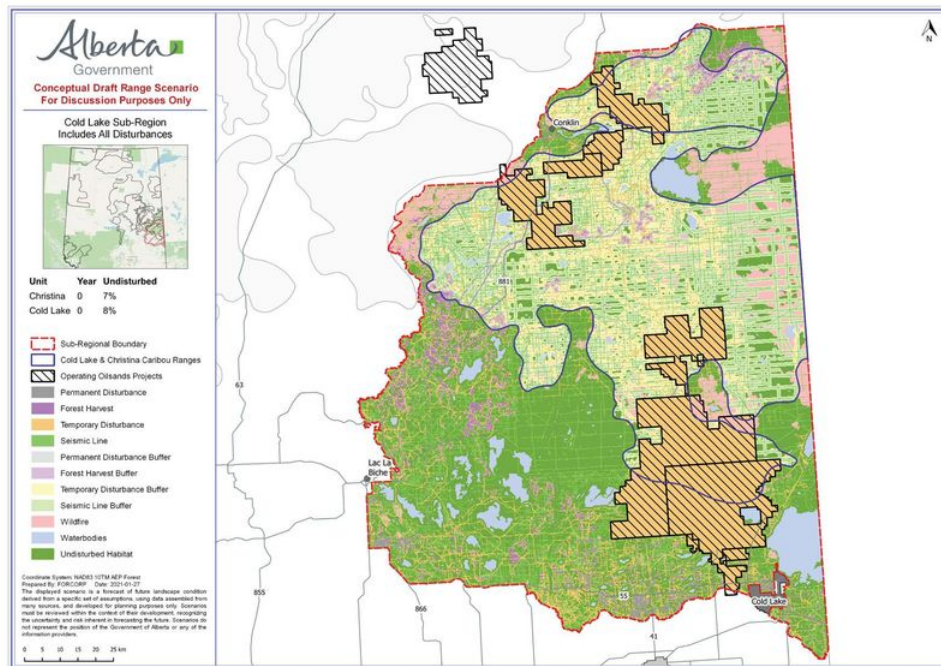


Help Cold Lake Caribou in NE Alberta

May 25, 2021



Alberta has agreed to establish a minimum of 65% undisturbed habitat in Cold Lake caribou range. Only 8% is undisturbed now (the bits of dark green). Map: Government of Alberta, January 2021.

Alberta Wilderness Association really needs your help to improve the outcomes for caribou and Indigenous land use in the Cold Lake area of northeast Alberta. This is a separate plan from Bistcho in northwest Alberta, which we wrote you about last week – both need public comments and your help will make a difference!

Until May 29th, the Alberta government is seeking public comments on its Draft Cold Lake Subregional Plan. You have two ways to help:

1. send an email (suggestion below)
2. fill out the government's survey (suggestions below — be as lengthy or brief as you want)

Please take a few minutes to send strong messages to our government to support caribou conservation and Indigenous land use rights. Thank you for speaking up for caribou in this important land-use plan!

- Carolyn Campbell

Suggested Email – send to: aep.northsrp@gov.ab.ca and copy ccampbell@abwild.ca

Dear Planners:

I am providing these comments to help Alberta improve the Draft Cold Lake

Subregional Plan that is available for public review now.

The access management plan has real potential to consolidate infrastructure, but there are still key gaps to close. It must include clear mandatory timelines to restore short-term roads and legacy seismic lines.

Meeting minimum caribou habitat needs can and should happen sooner than 100 years from now. The needs of species like barred owl that need older 'mixedwood' forests should also be met in this plan.

Managing for caribou habitat must include expected wildfire. All new fire is unrealistically left out, meaning caribou and other species needing old forest habitat bear the fire risk in this plan.

Far too many sensitive boreal lakes and river corridors are identified as priority recreation and tourism use areas; most should be managed to support biodiversity and Indigenous land use priorities.

There should be a much stronger commitment to a process of collaborating with Indigenous communities to support their traditional land use rights and caribou conservation and recovery.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

COLD LAKE SUBREGIONAL PLAN SURVEY - click [here](#)

Comments in red are suggestions for filling out the survey — feel free to add your own or modify these suggestions. Brief summaries and fact sheet links are within the survey; detailed Alberta government documents are [here](#).

SECTION 1 – Introduction

The draft Cold Lake Sub-regional Plan is intended to help government manage land-use activities so we can maintain a working landscape and the economy, while also supporting caribou and other species, recreational activities, and Indigenous traditional land use.

The Strategic Management Outcomes for the Cold Lake sub-region are:

- Support economic opportunities that provide benefits to local municipalities, Indigenous Peoples, and the rest of Alberta.
- Consolidate development over time to support landscape intactness, and naturally self-sustaining plant and wildlife populations, with a focus on species at risk.
- Support recreational, cultural and traditional land uses in the sub-region for the benefit of local peoples and all Albertans.

1. Do you think there are additional outcomes that we should consider for the sub-regional plan? Please describe them here.

Suggestion for Response:

Outcome 2 should add 'restore industrial footprint' and include 'timely' and 'caribou', to read:

"Consolidate development and restore industrial footprint in a timely manner to support landscape intactness, and naturally self-sustaining plant and wildlife populations, with a focus on caribou and other species at risk."

SECTION 2 – Supporting Caribou and Other Species

The draft Cold Lake Sub-regional Plan is intended to support self-sustaining plant and wildlife populations, including caribou, by proposing actions and approaches that will reduce the total amount of disturbed habitat in the sub-region, while continuing to support economic opportunities.

Sections of the draft plan propose management approaches and changes in technical requirements for specific sectors.

Find out more about how the draft plan would support caribou and other wildlife: [Fact Sheet: Supporting Caribou and Other Species](#) (PDF, 2.4 MB)

2. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting caribou and other wildlife?

1 Very effective

2 **Somewhat effective**

3 Neither effective nor ineffective

4 Somewhat ineffective

5 Very ineffective

6 I don't know

3. Please tell us why you answered that way.

Suggestion for Response:

The access management plan has real potential to consolidate roads and infrastructure and reclaim a significant amount of legacy industrial impacts, but there are still key gaps to close.

4. If you have other comments about supporting caribou and other species in the sub-region, add them here.

Suggestion for Response:

The access management plan must include clear mandatory timelines to restore short-term roads and legacy seismic lines or it won't happen. Meeting minimum caribou habitat needs can and should happen sooner than 100 years.

The needs of 'mature and old mixedwood forest' species like barred owl and Canada warbler should be identified and met in this plan.

Managing for caribou habitat must include expected wildfire. All new fire is unrealistically left out, meaning caribou and other species needing old forest habitat bear the fire risk in this plan.

SECTION 3 – Supporting Economic Opportunities

Alberta's landscapes are the backbone of our economy, providing natural resources that support the social and economic well-being of communities across the province and the country. The revenue generated from industrial activities helps fund schools, hospitals and other services that Albertans rely on. Maintaining these social benefits requires long-term economic opportunities and a healthy landscape.

To find out more about how the plan would help support economic activities, see: [Fact Sheet: Supporting Economic Opportunities](#) (PDF, 563 KB)

5. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting economic activities in the region? *

1 Very effective

2 **Somewhat effective**

3 Neither effective nor ineffective

4 Somewhat ineffective

5 Very ineffective

6 I don't know

6. Please tell us why you answered that way.

Suggestion for Response:

There are still key gaps to be able to reach minimum habitat requirements for caribou and other species at risk, and to uphold Indigenous land use rights; this will reduce the social license for industry to operate unless the gaps are closed.

7. If you have other comments about supporting economic opportunities in the sub-region, add them here.

Suggestion for Response:

For social license, the access management plan must include clear mandatory timelines to restore short-term roads and legacy seismic lines or there is far too much risk that habitat goals will be missed. Mineral tenure sales should not resume until that type of mandatory access management plan is in place.

Managing economic activities for caribou habitat must consider expected wildfire, which is now unrealistically left out of this plan.

Building out oil sands leases and resuming government sales of oil, gas and oil sands tenure is inconsistent with our climate obligations.

SECTION 4 – Supporting Recreational Opportunities

The draft Cold Lake sub-regional plan would support outdoor recreation opportunities by identifying high-value recreation areas and by careful consideration of future developments in and around these areas. The plan would also support recreation through a commitment to create a network of recreational areas, connected by trails that will support outdoor recreation and tourism needs.

For more information on how the draft plan supports recreation opportunities, see [Fact Sheet: Supporting Recreation and Tourism Opportunities](#) (PDF, 3.2 MB).

8. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting recreational opportunities in the region?

- 1 Very effective
- 2 Somewhat effective
- 3 Neither effective nor ineffective
- 4 **Somewhat ineffective**
- 5 Very ineffective
- 6 I don't know

9. Please tell us why you answered that way.

Suggestion for Response:

Far too many sensitive boreal lakes and river corridors are identified as priority recreation and tourism use areas; most should be managed to support biodiversity and Indigenous land use priorities.

10. If you have other comments about supporting recreational opportunities in the sub-region, add them here.

Suggestion for Response:

To provide more certainty for sustainable recreation activities, high impact lake-based recreation should be focused on a very limited number of front-country areas. Other access to sensitive boreal lakes and river corridors should be managed to support biodiversity and Indigenous land use priorities.

SECTION 5 – Supporting Indigenous Land Use

Healthy landscapes and ecosystems are integral to the exercise of Treaty rights, and to the practice of Indigenous land uses. The draft Cold Lake Sub-regional Plan would support Indigenous land use by minimizing habitat loss and landscape fragmentation, which will result in a more intact landscape. The plan would also support Indigenous partnerships in

economic opportunities, as well as continued Indigenous engagement in land use planning and natural resource management.

Find out how the draft plan would support Indigenous land use, see [Fact Sheet: Supporting Indigenous Traditional Uses](#) (PDF, 7.8 MB)

11. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting Indigenous land use in the region? *

- 1 Very effective
- 2 Somewhat effective
- 3 Neither effective nor ineffective
- 4 Somewhat ineffective
- 5 **Very ineffective**
- 6 I don't know

12. Please tell us why you answered that way.

Suggestion for Response:

The plan lacks commitment to a process for land-use collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous communities.

13. If you have other comments about supporting Indigenous land use in the sub-region, add them here.

Suggestion for Response:

There should be a much stronger commitment to a process of collaborating with Indigenous communities to support their land use rights, including identifying significant areas that prioritize Indigenous traditional land uses and caribou conservation and recovery.

(Ends with several demographic questions)



Alberta caribou. Photo © G. Gruenenwald.



Dedicated to the conservation of wilderness and completion of a protected areas network, AWA inspires communities to care for Alberta's wild spaces through awareness and action.

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