

What's Next for West Central Alberta's Upper Smoky Caribou?

By Carolyn Campbell, AWA Conservation Director



For millennia, caribou have roamed their Upper Smoky rangelands in west central Alberta. In recent decades they've lost nearly all their intact habitat due to unmanaged industrial impacts. Tragically, these caribou are now propped up by the province's controversial annual wolf cull.

Alberta is currently in the process of creating a comprehensive land-use plan for the Upper Smoky sub-region. In 2020, to avoid a federal habitat protection order, the government of Alberta promised to:

- Finish an enforceable Upper Smoky land-use plan by the end of 2022; and
- Manage Upper Smoky's caribou ranges to achieve habitat requirements for self-sustaining caribou.

AWA strongly believes Alberta's Upper Smoky land-use plan must also support:

- Indigenous rights;
- Habitat for other at-risk species, such as native cold-water fish;
- Forests, river corridors and wetlands that are resilient to climate change; and
- A transition to a diversified, environmentally sustainable regional economy.

Take Action to Help Upper Smoky Caribou

Your voice makes a difference. Citizens can strengthen the draft provincial Upper

Smoky plan. This may be the last chance for these caribou to survive and recover.

AWA supporters can write Alberta Minister of Environment and Parks, Whitney Issik (aep.minister@gov.ab.ca). AWA is calling for an Upper Smoky sub-regional land-use plan that:

- Protects and restores enough habitat for naturally self-sustaining caribou;
- Includes meaningful collaboration with Indigenous nations and communities to support their rights and land-use goals;

- Manages forests, river corridors and wetlands to be resilient to climate change and to recover other at-risk species; and
- Sets strong Decade 1 targets for the urgent progress needed on caribou habitat and Indigenous rights.

And please copy federal ECCC Minister Stephen Guilbeault (ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca) and AWA (ccampbell@abwild.ca). Thank you! 🍀



Alberta southern mountain caribou bull. Photo © J. Marriott