



Alberta Wilderness Association

Get to Know Upper Smoky's Caribou, Lands and People as Key Decisions Approach



Mountain caribou bull. Photo © John E. Marriott.

Dear AWA Supporter,

Alberta Wilderness Association has worked long and hard to bring attention to the dwindling caribou herds in west central Alberta so that effective action

would be taken to make sure these magnificent animals thrive for decades to come. Caribou are an iconic species that people around the world identify with Canada; losing them would be beyond tragic. Unfortunately, the decline in caribou populations is continuing as government and industry make only half-hearted efforts to restrain the industrialization that destroys caribou habitat. But soon there will be an important opportunity for *all* Albertans to weigh in on the future of the caribou in this part of the province.

Because Alberta is on the verge of crucial decision making for west central Alberta's caribou, AWA's Conservation Director, Carolyn Campbell, and I decided to put boots on the ground and travel up to the forests, mountain sides and lakes in the area between Grande Prairie and Grande Cache, known as The Upper Smoky. We wanted to see for ourselves what impact clear cut logging is having on caribou ranges. Is it seriously depriving the caribou of their key source of nutrition – lichens native to old-growth forests? Is natural gas infrastructure and all the roads needed for that pushing the caribou up into the sub-alpine ranges where it is much harder for them to survive in the winter? We talked with Indigenous people who have lived in the area for generations, to trappers who know every logging road, trail and mountain pass, and to caribou experts who worked for Alberta Fish and Wildlife (a branch of Alberta Environment and Parks). We saw the pulp mills and saw mills that change logs into commercial products. We got a lot of mud on our boots and we came to deeply appreciate this wild and wonderful corner of Alberta. After we got back to Calgary I contacted Wendy Crosina at the forestry giant Weyerhaeuser to get a better understanding of its future plans for the area.

The results of all this intrepid field work can be found in a special, detailed article launching today called [The Clock is Running Out for Caribou](#). You can easily browse key themes, such as 'Solutions', 'Getting to Know the Caribou of Upper Smoky', 'Industry Players'. It will bring you closer to the caribou and the people of west central Alberta. We hope it inspires you to get involved when, in the near future, the Alberta government consults on its proposed plan for saving the caribou in Upper Smoky and affords all Albertans a say in the future of these iconic animals.

- Gillian Steward

Take Action

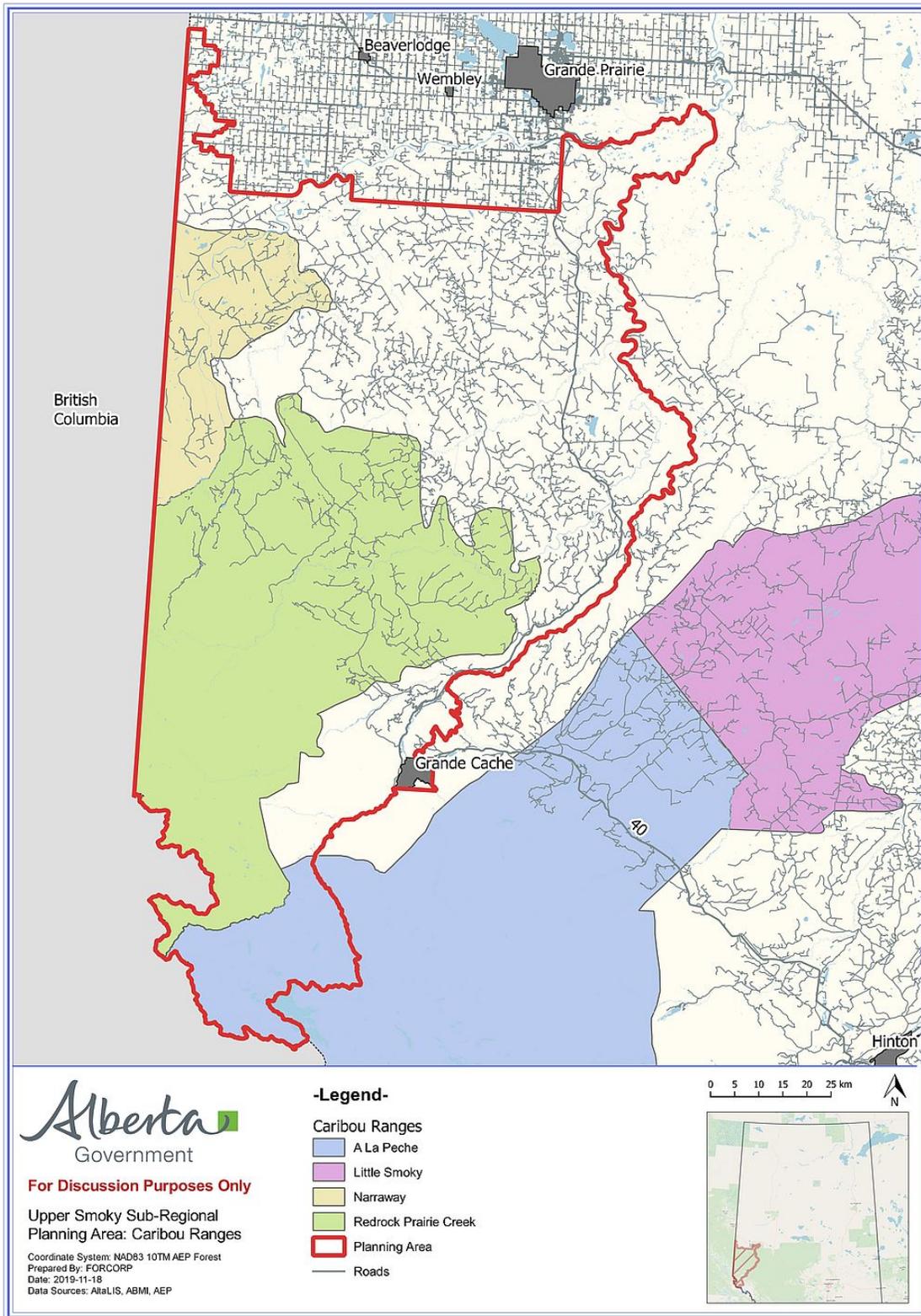
The launch of Gillian Steward's [special Upper Smoky profile](#) is a great opportunity to let decision makers know that these lands and caribou matter to you. If you can, please write Minister Whitney Issik (AEP.Minister@gov.ab.ca), and copy AWA (ccampbell@abwild.ca).

Consider making these points:

- recovery of Upper Smoky caribou is important to you, and time is running out;
- an Upper Smoky land-use plan needs to include strong early actions to reduce industrial impacts, so the lands can support wild caribou, Indigenous rights and a compatible environmentally sustainable economy;
- the provincial government should consult Albertans soon on its Upper Smoky land-use plan and then finish it during 2022, as promised.

Thanks for speaking up for Alberta caribou!

- *Carolyn Campbell*



Alberta's Upper Smoky sub-region (outlined in red) includes home ranges of two caribou populations facing imminent threats to their recovery: Redrock-Prairie Creek (shaded green) and Narraway (shaded yellow). Map source: Government of Alberta, 2019.



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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