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Alberta Wolf Kill Study: Root Cause of Caribou Decline Unchecked

A study published in late November revealed the Alberta government's extensive wolf kill program in the Little Smoky caribou range in west central Alberta has barely stabilized the caribou populations, while habitat disturbance that stimulates high wolf predation grows. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) calls on the Alberta government to commit in its upcoming range plans to reduce the heavy energy and forestry industry disturbance that is the root cause of caribou decline.

"Alberta is not showing environmental leadership by killing wolves," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. "Authorizing more logging and energy disturbance in caribou ranges makes it even harder to meet Canada's recovery strategy and Alberta's own policy, to recover caribou populations to self-sustaining levels - a policy which scientists note is both biologically and technically feasible."

AWA has many other concerns about Alberta's 10,000 km² wolf aerial gunning and poisoning program that has been conducted since winter 2005-6. It is highly unethical to kill over 100 healthy wolves per year while not addressing land uses that produce high deer and moose numbers that drive wolf populations. Also, this study confirms for the first time that the program extends into the Willmore Wilderness protected area, harming its wildlife because of adjacent irresponsible land use. Harm will occur to other species from poison baits checked only every 8 days on average. Bykill counts, as well as estimated impacts to scavengers such as wolverines, should be published.

Premier Prentice pledged during his leadership candidacy: "Under my leadership, we will establish Alberta as a world leader in the advancement of conservation and the protection of the environment." AWA looks forward to Alberta's upcoming range plans for the Little Smoky and A La Peche caribou to fulfill that pledge by requiring total habitat disturbance levels to fall.

Significant forestry activity is possible outside caribou ranges in west central Alberta, while steadily recovering caribou habitat. A large forest harvest deceleration from mountain pine beetle surge cuts is planned in the coming decades: while caribou still persist, the **deceleration is needed now**. Wood fibre quota sharing across west-central Alberta could enable logging to stop in caribou range and buffer areas, yet would assist the main in-range quota holders Alberta Newsprint Company, its parent company West Fraser, and Foothills Forest Products to absorb a fair but not crippling share of cut reduction.

Significant energy extraction is possible within caribou ranges, while steadily recovering caribou habitat. Real rules to reduce total industry footprint inside caribou range would motivate longer directional drilling and pooling of leases. Energy companies could finance extensive forest restoration work under a 'pay-to-stay in endangered species habitat' program, further cushioning impacts on municipalities.

Forestry and energy footprint in caribou ranges stimulates deer, moose, and predator populations, robbing the caribou of their ability to minimize overlap with predators. Provincial scientists assessed Alberta woodland caribou as 'endangered' in 2010, though the province has not yet updated their listing from 'threatened'. Caribou recovery is both technically and biologically feasible, according to scientists.

For more information:

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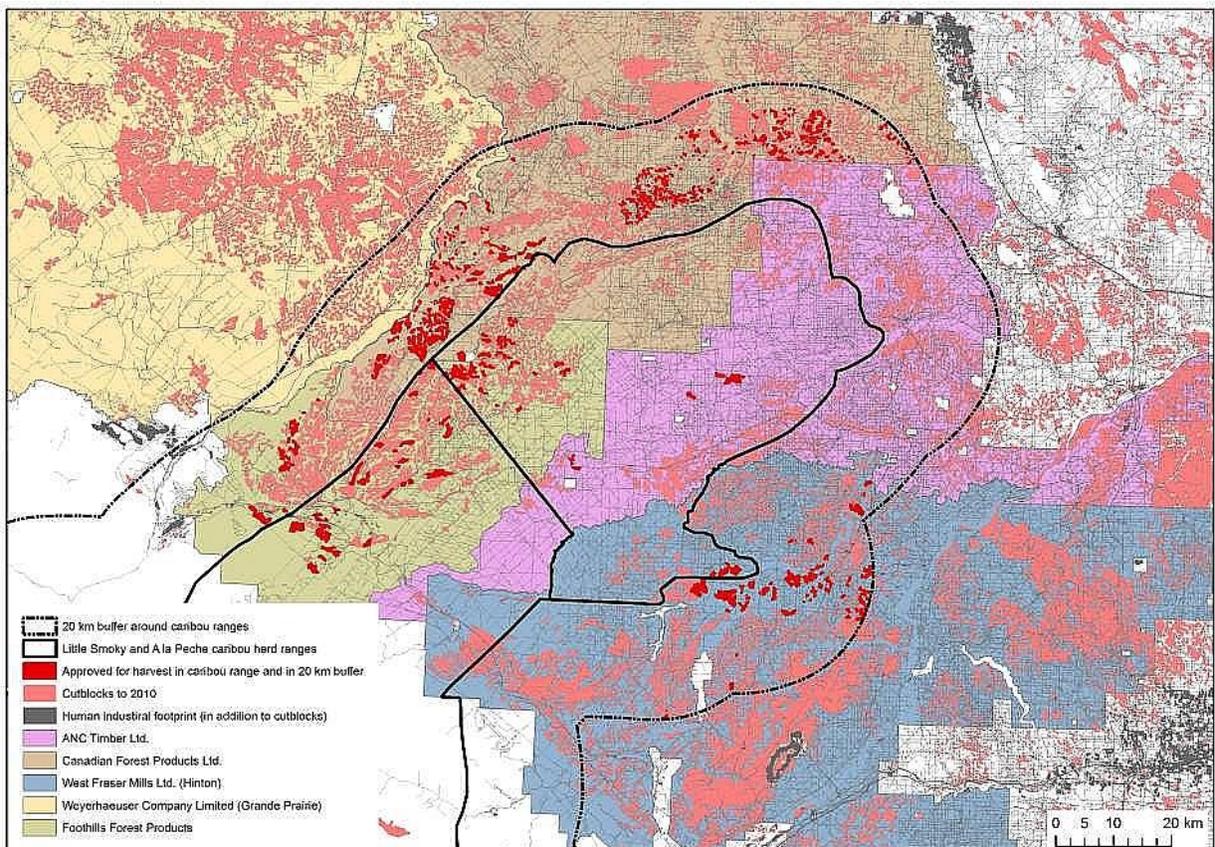




Maps and Photos of recent Logging in Little Smoky-A La Peche Endangered Caribou Ranges, Sites of Alberta's Forthcoming First Caribou Range Plans



**Cutblocks to 2010, and Approved for Harvest:
Little Smoky Range, and A La Peche Winter Range plus 20 Km Buffer Zone**



Source: Global Forest Watch Canada (June 2014). *State of Alberta Forests: With A Focus on the Eastern Slopes.*





Current Logging Activity in A La Peche Endangered Caribou Range, September 29, 2014

