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April 6, 2018

**RE: Message from Lisa Wardley, NWSAR Chair:**

It has been a whirlwind past two-months for NWSAR and for the residents of Northwest Alberta! Much has transpired since the government's final public engagement session on March 8th in Grande Prairie. NWSAR would like to thank each and every one of you for your informative engagement on the Draft Caribou Range Plan and your passion for the areas we all call home. I would like to update everyone on what has happened since NWSAR met with Minister Philips and a glimpse at what the future may hold for Caribou Range Plans and for NWSAR. NWSAR is not done yet!

***We have been busy doing:***

**Petition:**

The petition was a remarkable undertaking recommended by you; the residents of our region. This idea was orchestrated after the first NWSAR open house of 2018, held in High Level. We composed the petition prayer, attained a champion that agreed to table the petition in the Legislature and then began gathering signatures on February 2nd. A huge thank you goes out to all the businesses and individuals who assisted in gathering the signatures. NWSAR's goal was to attain 3,000 signatures. As a collective we bettered that goal. On March 15th, the petition was delivered complete with an astounding **9,460 signatures**, which equates to roughly 50% of the adult population of the NWSAR region!

**Postcard Program:**

The northerners pulled together and flooded the office of the Premier with postcards from the NWSAR region. Over 8,500 postcards were sent to your



mailboxes requesting you to share your thoughts with the Premier of Alberta, and you did. Recently, individuals have been reporting that they have received a letter from the Premier. These letters in response to your postcards are welcome. However, it is the hope of NWSAR that it was an oversight, on behalf of the Government of Alberta that not once, were municipalities mentioned as a group (in these response letters) that has a stake or value to be included in the outcome of caribou range planning. Municipalities are closely connected to the people and their communities. NWSAR is a partnership of six northwestern municipalities working collaboratively for the future of our region. We have a stake in our future, we are the local voice for the people.

### **Provincial Open Houses:**

Members of NWSAR attended all six open houses held by Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) in Whitecourt, Edmonton, Cold Lake, Fort McMurray, High Level and Grande Prairie. Because of the efforts of NWSAR, northerners came out in full force to the High Level Open House, and larger numbers were also seen in Grande Prairie. More than 1,300 of you attended in High Level, please give yourselves a huge pat on the back! Most importantly, all of you were educated, engaged and had taken the time to review the entire Draft Provincial Range Plan and/or the NWSAR Recommendations Report. The input from everyone was amazing and the questions you asked of the range planners were well-articulated. NWSAR was as disappointed as all of you that the planners could not deviate from their open house format and take the opportunity to go through the entire Draft Range Plan to truly engage with all the residents. NWSAR thanks all of you for taking the time to travel and attend the Alberta's open houses in either, High Level or Grande Prairie. You did make a difference!

### **Rally at the Leg! (Video online, Website and Facebook)**

On February 22nd, the same day as the AEP open house in Edmonton, members from NWSAR participated in a rally that was organized by Alberta Forest Alliance. This rally was organized to bring awareness about the potential harmful effects of the Draft Caribou Range Plan to the people and the caribou of Northern Alberta. Other speakers included the Mayor of Woodlands County, a Union Rep for Unifor, a mom and pop logging contractor, an engaged citizen from La Crete and a brilliant young girl from Whitecourt. These message truly brought home the potential impact on our communities. I would like to share her real life example of how many could be affected in some way: "Out of the 105 students in my grade at Hilltop School, 52 of them have family members directly employed by forestry and oil and



gas. 38 of the 105 students have family members in jobs that support the forestry and oil and gas industries. That leaves only 15 students with families that will not be affected by the Caribou Range Plan.” While this is a Whitecourt classroom, our communities are very similar if not in some cases more so. In order for plans that will be effective for caribou recovery and communities, they need to be created with local input.

### **Provincial Stakeholder Roundtable Workshop:**

For two complete days in February and another full day in March, members from NWSAR, through invitations from AAMDC and AUMA (the two Provincial municipal associations) attended multi-stakeholder workshops in Edmonton, hosted by AEP. NWSAR was extremely hopeful at the prospect of these meetings. These sessions were the first time that all stakeholders and rights holders were in the same room at the same time to discuss solutions for caribou range planning. NWSAR was hoping for some positive, meaningful dialogue; dialogue that included talking about missing details in the Draft Range Plan. While the connections that NWSAR made are invaluable, the missing details in the plan are still unclear. There still remains a lot of work to do as a collaborative group.

### **Big Day at the Legislature!**

On March 19th, members of NWSAR were in attendance in the gallery of the Legislature for the tabling of the NWSAR petition and for Question Period. NWSAR was introduced by Jason Nixon, MLA Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. During Question Period, seven (7) opposition MLAs asked questions of the government on the Caribou Range Plans. We would like to thank all those MLA's and Jason Kenney for their support and involvement throughout our lobbying efforts, and for tabling the petition.

During the beginning of Question Period, Premier Rachel Notley stood and announced that a letter from Minister Phillips, Minister McCuaig-Boyd and Minister Carlier had been sent to the Honourable Minister McKenna, Honourable Minister Carr, and Parliamentary Secretary, Jonathan Wilkinson with the Government of Canada.

The following provides the three (3) main highlights of the letter:



1. “Alberta is suspending consideration of conservation lands recommended in the *Caribou Task Force Report*, pending further review and the outcome of the socio-economic impact study”;
2. “Caribou recovery cannot occur without an infusion of federal funds to restore habitat necessary to ensure population growth”; and
3. “Over the coming days we will assemble a delegation of representatives from northern Alberta to go to Ottawa to make Alberta’s case with regard to the challenges, concerns and opportunities present in Alberta’s range planning process. We will also be sending a delegation of officials to Ottawa to begin to work together on a plan to analyze and mitigate the costs of this enormous undertaking to fulfill federal law.”

The entire letter can be found on NWSAR’s website and Facebook page.

Debbie Jabbour, MLA for Peace River tabled this letter in the House. NWSAR thanks Debbie for this action and for the support she has shown on this file.

#### **Meeting with Minister Phillips:**

On March 21st, during the AAMDC Convention in Edmonton, a meeting was called by Minister Phillips’ office; representatives from approximately fourteen (14) Municipalities were in attendance. Minister Phillips stated that the Province is still submitting Caribou Range Plans, minus the conservation areas, in order to meet the Federal Government’s April, 2018 deadline. NWSAR requested an additional opportunity to help inform this plan. The group was asked to send all our comments to AEP. The Government of Alberta stated they were working on who would be invited to partake in the Northern Alberta delegation to Ottawa, we have yet to hear who is on the delegation.

#### **Next Steps for NWSAR:**

Based on these recent developments, NWSAR has switched gears. Even though the implementation of conservation area designations has been suspended, awaiting the outcome of the socio-economic impact study, the Provincial Range Plan will be submitted to the Federal Government. NWSAR is once again drafting responses to the Draft Range Plan for submission to AEP, and we will again submit our Recommendations Report, originally submitted to AEP in September, 2017. NWSAR will also continue to work as closely as possible with AEP’s range planners on the outcomes of the submitted Range Plans for this region.



NWSAR, is really excited about the prospect of being part of the Northern Alberta Delegation to Ottawa, although we have yet to hear an update on this opportunity. NWSAR has put three names forward for inclusion in the Ottawa delegation. They are:

1. Crystal McAteer, NWSAR Vice-Chair (Mayor Town of High Level);
2. Terry Ungarian, NWSAR Member (Reeve County of Northern Lights); and
3. Byron Peters, NWSAR Admin Lead, (Deputy CAO Mackenzie County).

As most of you are aware, we have been working to gather information pertinent to caribou range planning in Northwest Alberta since June, 2016. The information we've gathered, has ranged from local stakeholder feedback, to national scientific evaluation and opinion. Our members from across the region have become very well-versed in the challenges and the requirements facing, both Northwestern Albertans and the Woodland Boreal Caribou, and we believe that we could be an integral part of this Northern Alberta Delegation.

NWSAR would like to play an active role in assisting the Government of Alberta in achieving Caribou Range Plans that increase caribou populations and protect our local economies.

NWSAR is pursuing partnership/grant funding to begin exploring our recommendations and addressing concerns with limited/inaccurate data or data gaps. Stay tuned for details.

NWSAR is also in the process of developing a new communications plan, which will involve a Federal component and Federal strategy.

NWSAR is formulating a Resolution for the FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) Conference in June, 2018. The Species at Risk Act (2002) is Federal Legislation, NWSAR is developing a Resolution with the goal of gaining support from municipalities across Canada who face similar challenges. NWSAR wants to bring attention to the areas of the Act that require amendments to make species at risk planning truly about species population recovery. .

### **In closing...**

We would like to recognize the efforts and request the continued engagement by the people of the NWSAR region and beyond.



We would like to acknowledge the Government of Alberta, specifically Minister Philips, for providing a temporary suspension regarding candidate conservation protection area designations in Northwest Alberta; and to recognize MLA Debbie Jabbour for her dedication and understanding of this file, the issues that we are facing now and the potential future impacts of range planning. We are hopeful that the valuable work continues with the larger local multi-stake/rights holder groups to assist in creating effective range-specific plans.

We would like to recognize the continued work by the Official Opposition during Question Period and for their assistance in helping us to keep the spotlight on Provincial caribou range planning.

NWSAR is not done yet! We look forward to continuing our work and developing even stronger relationships with our regional partners, our citizens, our industries big and small, the Province and in the near future the Federal Government. We are confident that in the end, by working together there will be Caribou Range Plans that focus on caribou population recovery, as well as vibrant and thriving northern communities.

Sincerely,



Lisa Wardley  
Chairperson, NWSAR  
Deputy Reeve, Mackenzie County

