

Protecting caribou without creating a provincial park

Local municipal committee releases report to both protect Woodland Caribou and support northwest Alberta's future

June 27, 2017 — Fort Vermilion, AB — After learning of the Government of Alberta's proposal to permanently protect 1.8 million hectares of land for caribou in northwest Alberta, councillors from the area's six municipalities leapt into action and formed the Northwest Species at Risk (NWSAR) Committee to ensure local voices were heard. Together they are releasing their report for both the provincial and federal government's to consider when they implement plans to protect the area's Woodland Caribou. The Committee found that there would be major socio-economic impacts to the Peace Country region if a provincial or national park were created – effectively sterilizing the area's natural resources.

“We want to see a balanced approach for caribou recovery. Practical solutions that involve industry, traditional knowledge and stakeholder input so we can have sustainable and vibrant communities,” said Lisa Wardley, Chair of the Northwest Species at Risk Committee and Deputy Reeve of Mackenzie County.

The forestry sector could see a decrease of over 38% of working landscape if a park were created. This would result in the loss of over 640 jobs. The trapper and outfitter industry would also risk losing over 140 jobs, with other industries such as oil and gas facing further losses.

There are many examples in the province where parkland has not increased animal populations. Instead, a landscape that supports both economic activity and environmental stewardship has had great success – such as the Hays Zama Bison herd recovery and the grizzly bear recovery in the province.

Through the Committee's hard work over the past year, they have undertaken socioeconomic analysis, the collection of scientific data and extensive stakeholder consultation to create this report with ten recommendations for responsible caribou recovery.

The Committee urges the federal and provincial government's to consider their report and most importantly listen to local voices through further consultation.

“Our municipalities and the communities that we represent want to be a contributor to caribou recovery,” said Wardley. “We have innovative ideas from experts, industry,

community members and associations that are not only valuable but essential to ensuring our region supports the environment and continues to contribute to Alberta's economy."

To view the Committee's report [click here](#).

BACKGROUND

Woodland Caribou are designated as a threatened species under federal and provincial legislation. Both levels of government require recovery strategies to protect these caribou.

The provincial government is expected to put in place a provincial recovery strategy for Woodland Caribou in Fall 2017. The federal government is expected to adopt or reject provincial plans for the recovery of Woodland Caribou in October 2017.

NWSAR Committee Information

The Northwest Species at Risk Committee is comprised of municipal councillors from Mackenzie County, County of Northern Lights, Town of High Level, Town of Rainbow Lake, Clear Hills County and Town of Manning.

For more information, contact the Northwest Species at Risk Committee at 780-928-3983, email Byron Peters, bpeters@mackenziecounty.com or contact your municipal councillor from: Mackenzie County, County of Northern Lights, Town of High Level, Town of Rainbow Lake, Clear Hills County and Town of Manning.

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