



Release Date: May 12, 2014

Alberta Plans More Oil and Gas Lease Sales Where Endangered Mountain Caribou Live

In early May, Alberta's 'mountain' caribou were assessed as *Endangered* - in immediate danger of extinction - by Canada's *Species at Risk Act* scientist advisors (COSEWIC). Yet the Alberta government plans to sell off a further 1,765 hectares of energy leases in these endangered caribou ranges from May 14 to June 25, in apparent disregard of the habitat crisis facing its caribou. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) calls on the Alberta government to stop undermining caribou survival chances and to halt new leasing and surface disturbance within caribou ranges.

"New lease holders expecting to create new surface disturbance to prove energy leases only worsen the problems for Alberta's endangered caribou," says Carolyn Campbell, conservation specialist at AWA. "For these vanishing populations, such harmful practices should be long gone, especially considering there are technological and financial tools that offer viable alternatives to the status quo."

The ongoing habitat destruction violates Alberta's own stated [caribou policy](#) priority to maintain caribou habitat. It also undermines the [federal boreal caribou strategy](#) requiring provinces to make progress towards at least 65% undisturbed habitat within caribou ranges. Scientists have [warned](#) that most Alberta caribou populations will not survive beyond a few decades, and the root cause of the problem is ongoing habitat disturbance.

Although Alberta's mountain caribou have just been assessed as *Endangered*, its *Threatened* boreal caribou also endure industrial disturbance levels far beyond what populations can tolerate to be self-sustaining (see attached chart). Since October 2012, Alberta has auctioned new oil and gas leases/licenses in every boreal caribou range, and most are also covered with oil sands leases. (Global Forest Watch Canada [reported](#) in January 2012 that 46,000 km² or 83% of caribou range area within Alberta's oil sands administration region already had bitumen leases as of July 2011).

In May 2013, [Alberta temporarily stopped](#) new energy leasing in two west central populations (Little Smoky, which is boreal, and A La Peche, which is a mountain population) while range plans are being developed. "The hold on new energy leasing for Little Smoky and A La Peche caribou needs to extend to Alberta's other caribou ranges," says Campbell. "It's also urgent to reduce net industrial disturbance within these ranges. Scientists have [stated](#) that woodland caribou recovery is both technically and biologically feasible, but the new *Endangered* mountain caribou assessment reaffirms how very far Alberta still is from responsible resource development."

For more information:

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Attached: Table of oil and gas (PNG) leases and licenses sold since the federal boreal caribou recovery strategy, and pending to June 25, 2014; Map of Alberta caribou ranges.





**Alberta Government Oil and Gas Rights Auctions on Caribou Ranges
since the federal boreal woodland caribou recovery strategy of October 5, 2012**

AB Caribou Population	Total Disturbed Habitat % reported in 2011 by Env. Canada	Auctioned since federal boreal woodland caribou recovery strategy, Oct 5 2012 (surface area – ha)	Upcoming auctions May 14 2014 to Jun 25 2014 (surface area - ha)
A La Peche	n/a	0	0
Narraway	n/a	25,655	1,237
Jasper (is within National Park)	n/a	0	0
Redrock-Prairie Creek	n/a	39,069	528
Total AB Mountain Caribou		64,724	1,765
Bistcho	71%	110,861	330
Caribou Mountains	57%	8,383	0
Chinchaga	76%	96,326	264
Cold Lake	85%	27,199	0
ESAR	81%	452	0
Little Smoky	95%	9,816	0
Nipisi	68%	21,598	0
Slave Lake	80%	2,162	0
Red Earth	62%	131,408	330
Richardson	82%	532	0
WSAR	69%	8,241	264
Yates	61%	63,073	0
Total AB Boreal Caribou		481,051	1,188
Total Alberta Caribou		545,775	2,953

Note: The federal boreal woodland caribou recovery strategy requires provinces to develop range plans outlining how at least 65% **undisturbed** habitat will be achieved and maintained over time in that range.



