



ALBERTA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

September 17, 2010

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Subject: Review of the National Recovery Plan for Boreal Woodland Caribou

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the ENGO workshop held in Edmonton regarding the National Recovery Plan for Boreal Woodland Caribou in Canada. The Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS) supports the efforts of Environment Canada and we would encourage the Minister to implement a very aggressive plan as soon as possible. We offer the following recommendations:

1. Adopt the draft plan in its current form and implement a strategy for all herds.
2. Define Critical Habitat and apply the definition to at least the current identifiable range. Although it is intuitive that the historical range was in all cases larger than the current range, it will be easier to defend a strategy that applies to the existing distribution.
3. Critical Habitat may differ between herds, but the scientific evidence to date suggests that a minimum of 60 – 70% of the range should remain free of any anthropogenic footprint (i.e., roads and timber harvest). This amount should be increased for herds that are smaller. If these thresholds have been exceeded, efforts must be made to restore “habitat integrity” as soon as possible.
4. An effort should be made to restore all herds. It will become evident that the recovery of some herds will cost much more than others, but the goal should be to attempt to recover all herds in order to demonstrate to all Canadians the factors that led to the need for a recovery program for boreal woodland caribou. The lack of planning that occurred for boreal woodland caribou has been repeated for many wildlife species in Canada and recovery planning will be required in a continuum unless a more effective strategy of wildlife conservation is initiated nationwide. In addition, a strategy that immediately erodes the goal of restoring all herds before implementation plans are in place will become too convenient for governments and the end result will seriously compromise conservation efforts even further.

5. Existing knowledge will always need to be refined, but this shouldn't be used as an excuse to prolong implementing recovery actions while information is collected. Time is of the essence and the precautionary principle should guide recovery planning with immediate action followed by intense monitoring (i.e., adaptive management).

Please keep ACTWS advised of further development and we would welcome continued participation in conservation efforts for any wildlife species and/or their habitats.

Sincerely,

Dave Scobie
President
Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society