

Caribou Action & Range Planning FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions about Alberta's Caribou Action and Range Planning

Alberta Caribou Action and Range Planning Project

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What is the Alberta Caribou Action and Range Planning Project and why is it important now?

The Government of Alberta is committed to achieving naturally-sustaining caribou populations through our *Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan* (2005) and *A Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta* (2011).

Woodland caribou populations have declined across Alberta and Canada over the past century. Caribou are currently listed as Threatened under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*.

In October 2012, the Government of Canada released its Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), Boreal Population in Canada.

The provinces are directed to develop action and range plans to outline how each caribou range will be managed to ensure critical habitat is protected over time to enable a self-sustaining caribou population.

Significant work on many of these requirements is already underway through Alberta's existing policies and programs.

The Alberta Caribou Action and Range Planning Project will build on existing and previous work and develop action and range plans to meet provincial and federal caribou population and habitat objectives.

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How and when will the Government of Alberta develop Caribou Range and Action Plans?

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and Alberta Energy are co-leading the caribou range and action planning. Caribou range plans, as sub-regional plans, will be integrated and aligned with regional plans, and associated management frameworks, contributing to the Government of Alberta's integrated resource management system.

15 range plans will be developed in the coming years to protect our herds and adhere to federal

legislation. Little Smoky and A La Peche are already underway and remaining plans will follow.

The Government of Alberta will use guiding principles and an adaptive planning approach to develop action and range plans. The principles include a commitment to

- working landscapes
- self-sustaining caribou populations
- balanced approaches
- developing range plans in a collaborative manner with First Nations and Métis organizations and through a variety of engagement mechanisms with key stakeholders

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Who will be involved in caribou action and range planning and how?

Caribou conservation is a shared government, public and private sector responsibility, therefore targeted stakeholder engagement will be a key element to achieve a balanced approach to action and range planning.

Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Groups will be established for each phase. These advisory groups include key stakeholders, First Nations and Métis organizations and will collaborate to develop, review and provide strategic advice on elements of range and action planning. The Little Smoky and A La Peche Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group began meeting in August, 2013.

A series of stakeholder workshops will complement the advisory group process. These workshops will invite a broader representation of communities and stakeholder organizations having an interest in range planning and be focused on themes of foundations, innovations and plan development.

Range Plans and Action Plans

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What is a range plan?

Range plans are documents that outline how a given range will be managed to ensure that critical habitat is protected for sustaining caribou populations.

Specifically, each range plan should reflect disturbance patterns on the landscape, as measured and updated by the provinces and territories, and outline measures and steps that will be taken to manage the interaction between human disturbance and natural disturbance.

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What is an action plan?

Action plans, which are required under the Federal Recovery Strategy, provide the public and

stakeholders with details on how the recovery strategy will be implemented.

Action plans include a broad spectrum of subjects, such as:

1. measures to address threats and to achieve population and distribution objectives
2. an evaluation of socio-economic costs and benefits to be derived from its implementation
3. an approach for monitoring and reporting, etc.

An action plan is not necessarily range-specific; it could cover multiple ranges or even specific recovery measures within a range.

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What will action and range planning include?

To meet both Government of Alberta and Government of Canada requirements, action and range plans will:

- Describe environmental baseline conditions for each caribou local population range
- Engage stakeholder groups throughout the planning process
- Engage with First Nations and Métis throughout the planning process
- Identify environmental, social and economic outcomes for each range using a balanced approach including a socio-economic evaluation
- Develop management options for achieving outcomes
- Demonstrate how self-sustaining caribou populations will be achieved or maintained
- Demonstrate how protection of critical habitat goals will be achieved or maintained over time

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Caribou Status and Conservation

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What is the current status of Caribou in Alberta?

Traditionally, caribou have played a prominent role in the history of Alberta and they remain an integral part of a healthy northern ecosystem.

Woodland caribou populations have declined across Alberta and across Canada over the past century.

Caribou are currently listed as Threatened under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*.

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What is Alberta currently doing to protect caribou in the province?

The Alberta government believes caribou management and conservation can be achieved on a landscape that supports human activity. Government is taking a multi-faceted approach to improve conditions for caribou in Alberta.

Government approved a Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan in 2005, and adopted *A Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta* in 2011. This commits us to achieving naturally-sustaining woodland caribou

populations and identifies habitat conservation and restoration as important actions.

In addition, development in a caribou zone must follow numerous controls, standards, and guidelines based on the woodland caribou policy and specified in the enhanced approval process for pipelines, access roads, well sites and pipeline installations.

Industry undertaking new exploration and construction activities that fall within caribou zones must submit a comprehensive Caribou Protection Plan aimed at reducing human contact (especially during calving periods), reducing habitat loss, and specifying strict operating conditions for the area.

Regional planning across the province will include landscape and biodiversity management frameworks and will bring landscape issues to broader public discussion.

On the forestry side, under the Alberta Forest Planning Standard, management for woodland caribou can be accomplished in the development of company-specific forest management plans.

A zone-management approach has been proposed for timber planning until range plans are in place; these zones adjust spatial harvest sequencing, with lower rates of timber harvesting in critical areas for caribou.

Protective measures are built into the Forestry Operating Ground Rules, such as: "early in, early out", larger cutblocks, edge and retention patches. The province has also allocated resources to ensure we have the most detailed and precise information on caribou population trends and range mapping in Canada (collected over the last 20 years).

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