



STATEMENT

Government of Canada's Approach to Addressing the Imminent Threats to the Recovery of Southern Mountain Caribou



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Statement

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Background

Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (henceforth: "southern mountain caribou") are found in the southern two-thirds of British Columbia and in west-central Alberta. The species was first listed as threatened under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) in 2003. The final *Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Canada* was published in 2014, as required by SARA section 43(2). The recovery strategy defined 24¹ local population units, which comprise one or more subpopulations or herds of southern mountain caribou.

Measures under section 58 of SARA were enacted in 2014 to legally protect the critical habitat of southern mountain caribou within Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks of Canada in British Columbia, and Banff and Jasper National Parks of Canada in Alberta. Pursuant to subsection 58(2) of SARA, the description of the critical habitat within these national parks was published in the *Canada Gazette* on August 30, 2014, and the prohibition on destruction of critical habitat (subsection 58 (1) of SARA) came into effect on November 28, 2014.

The *Multi-species Action Plan for Banff National Park of Canada*, the *Multi-Species Action Plan for Jasper National Park of Canada*, and the *Multi-Species Action Plan for Mount Revelstoke National Park of Canada and Glacier National Park of Canada* were published in 2017.

Imminent Threats to Southern Mountain Caribou Recovery

On May 4, 2018, the Minister of the Environment (hereafter 'the Minister') announced that she had formed the opinion that southern mountain caribou is facing imminent threats to its recovery.

Southern mountain caribou require large areas of relatively undisturbed, interconnected habitat where they can separate themselves from predators, modify their use of the landscape in response to various natural and human-caused habitat disturbances and human activities, and access their preferred food sources. Industrial, commercial, and recreational land uses including forestry, mining, roads and other linear features, combined with natural disturbances, such as forest fires and insect outbreaks, have led to high levels of habitat disturbance and fragmentation in many parts of the species' distribution. Extensive habitat disturbance is linked

¹ Note that the Mount Robson local population unit includes only small portions of subpopulation ranges that are captured in other local population units.

to unsustainable levels of predation, which has resulted in a significant decline in the size of the southern mountain caribou population. As of February 2020, the population was approximately 3100 animals, a decline of 53% over approximately six years.

The full Imminent Threat Assessment can be found here: https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=3319

Recommendation and Decision under Section 80 of SARA

As required under subsection 80(2) of SARA², the Minister has recommended the making of an emergency order to provide for the protection of southern mountain caribou.

Having considered:

- the Minister's recommendation pursuant to ss. 80(2) of SARA,
- the measures enacted to legally protect the critical habitat of southern mountain caribou in protected areas as per ss. 58(2),
- the conservation measures described below, and their contributions to addressing the imminent threats to the recovery of southern mountain caribou,
- the Government of Canada's commitment to responding to the imminent threats facing the species through a collaborative stewardship-based approach with provinces, Indigenous communities, and other key partners, and
- the social, economic, policy and other factors, including the broader public interest,

the Government of Canada has declined the making of an emergency order at this time.

This approach respects provincial jurisdiction, recognizes the important contribution of Indigenous peoples to the recovery of southern mountain caribou, and seeks to support the participation of local communities and stakeholders in caribou recovery, so that conservation measures can be implemented in a way that respects those who, like the caribou, depend on the land for their livelihood.

Collaborative Stewardship-based Approach to Work towards Addressing the Imminent Threats Facing the Species

The following measures have been taken, continue to be taken, and will be taken to contribute towards addressing the imminent threats to the recovery of southern mountain caribou:

²80 (1) The Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the competent minister, make an emergency order to provide for the protection of a listed wildlife species.

(2) The competent minister must make the recommendation if he or she is of the opinion that the species faces imminent threats to its survival or recovery.

- On February 21, 2020, the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia, the Saluteau First Nations, and the West Moberly First Nations signed the *Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group of the Southern Mountain Caribou*, which sets out actions intended to work towards the recovery of the Central Group of southern mountain caribou to levels that are self-sustaining and that support traditional Indigenous harvesting activities, consistent with existing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. Details of the agreement can be found on the Species at Risk Public Registry: <https://species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/documents/3202>
- On February 21, 2020, the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia signed the *Canada–British Columbia Conservation Agreement for Southern Mountain Caribou in British Columbia*, which establishes a framework for cooperation and sets out immediate and long-term measures in support of southern mountain caribou conservation and recovery in each of the Northern, Central, and Southern Groups. Details of the agreement can be found on the Species at Risk Public Registry: <https://species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/documents/3202>
- On October 19, 2020, the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta signed the *Agreement for the Conservation and Recovery of the Woodland Caribou in Alberta*, which includes measures to support the conservation and recovery of southern mountain caribou and boreal caribou in the province. Details of the agreement can be found on the Species at Risk Public Registry: <https://species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/consultations/3533>
- Through the Canada Nature Fund, the Government of Canada is funding protection and recovery measures for southern mountain caribou that are being implemented by the Governments of British Columbia and Alberta, Indigenous peoples and other partners.
- In June 2019, the Government of British Columbia enacted orders under the provincial *Environment and Land Use Act* and *Forest Act*, which act as an interim moratorium on new resource development in parts of east-central British Columbia, for the purposes of protecting southern mountain caribou habitat. These orders will be in effect until June 2021. As set out in the *Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group of the Southern Mountain Caribou*, the Government of British Columbia will seek to renew these regulatory measures prior to June 2021, and seek to replace the regulatory measures with permanent protection in specified areas.
- The Governments of British Columbia and Alberta, a number of Indigenous communities, and numerous organizations or individuals are delivering a wide variety of direct actions that contribute to addressing the imminent threats facing the species.

These include management of predators and their primary prey, measures to augment caribou populations including through the use of maternity pens, and habitat restoration activities.

The Minister will be closely monitoring the implementation of each of the measures described in this Statement. In appropriate circumstances, the Minister could make a new recommendation for an emergency order to provide for the protection of southern mountain caribou.

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