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Suzuki  
Foundation

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Alberta Wilderness Association



WILDLANDS LEAGUE  
*A chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society*



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## JOINT STATEMENT ON THE PLIGHT OF BOREAL CARIBOU IN CANADA

**October 6, 2017:** This week, the fifth anniversary of the 2012 Recovery Strategy for boreal caribou came and went including a key deadline that was missed by jurisdictions for range plans and laws to protect boreal caribou critical habitat<sup>1</sup>. The provinces and territories have had 5 years to protect boreal caribou critical habitat and failed. Destruction of habitat continues throughout the country.

That this is happening in Canada is shocking. This failure is a black mark on Canada's national and international reputation as a leader for stewarding its natural heritage and wilderness.

Let there be no doubt that the science is strong and being reinforced with new evidence. Habitat loss and alteration driven by widespread industrial activity is a high level threat for boreal caribou; increases in habitat disturbance result in a greater likelihood of population decline and extirpation of caribou.

The continued erosion of boreal caribou critical habitat impoverishes us all. It will have significant impacts on many Indigenous Peoples' rights, cultures and traditional livelihoods. It risks tarnishing Canada's reputation in the global marketplace, as U.S. and international purchasers buy Canadian products based on the understanding that Canada will protect its wildlife and honour its commitments to Indigenous Peoples.

The path forward is clear. Canada has a global responsibility to stem the tide of its wildlife loss.

Protecting the critical habitat of threatened boreal caribou is also consistent with Canada's international commitment to protect 17 percent of its lands and inland waters by 2020.

Protecting Canada's caribou critical habitat is an important means of ensuring we have a healthy boreal forest for our children and grandchildren. And as the boreal forest region is one of the world's most important carbon storehouses, keeping large tracts intact is also part of smart, science-based climate change strategy.

Therefore, we all come together on behalf of concerned Canadians and Americans to demand that:

- All responsible provincial and territorial governments immediately stop the expansion of the industrial footprint in boreal caribou ranges that have exceeded 35% disturbance, and take immediate steps to protect critical habitat. We expect provinces and territories to do this in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and with their free, prior and informed consent; and,
- The federal Environment and Climate Change Minister release a section 63 report confirming that boreal caribou critical habitat in Canada remains largely unprotected and identifying the steps that will be taken to protect critical habitat.
- Following this report and consideration of whether the actions to protect critical habitat have been taken, the Minister should fulfill her duties under section 61(4) of SARA, by consulting with the provinces and territories, and then by recommending to cabinet a protection order for portions of critical habitat in jurisdictions where the laws of the province or territory do not effectively protect boreal caribou critical habitat. This is colloquially known as the 'safety net' order.

**Signed:** • Alberta Wilderness Association • Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society • David Suzuki Foundation  
• Greenpeace • Ontario Nature • Natural Resources Defense Council • Nature Canada  
• Wildlands League • Wilderness Committee

<sup>1</sup> Boreal caribou critical habitat is identified for all boreal caribou ranges in the 2012 federal recovery strategy except for one range in northern Saskatchewan.