

Caribou Mountains Sub-regional Plan

Overview

The plan guides how public land and resources are managed over time to balance economic activity, ecosystem health, community well-being, and the exercise of Indigenous and Treaty rights. Sub-regional plans help guide decisions about where activities such as forestry, energy development, recreation, and restoration can take place.

Key components of the plan

Zonation

- The sub-region is divided into two distinct zones: Go-Zone, including Compartment A, and Nature-first Zone.
- Each zone is designed based on ecological sensitivity, existing disturbance, and caribou and bison habitat value. The zones help to inform the decision-making process for development activities, while prioritizing restoration activities for inactive development footprints.
 - **Go Zone** – The outcome for this zone is to support a working landscape while minimizing overall footprint.
 - The plan supports the expected scale of future development required to enable economic growth with few new constraints or requirements outside of Compartment A.
 - **Compartment A (within the Go Zone)** – The outcome for this zone is to achieve the greatest improvement in landscape intactness as soon as possible, while still supporting a working landscape.
 - The plan prioritizes early restoration and more requirements for new development to create a landscape that can better support traditional land uses.
 - **Nature-first Zone** – The outcome for this zone is to prioritize conservation and ecosystem services with opportunities for traditional land uses, outdoor recreation, habitat restoration and habitat enhancement.
 - The plan prioritizes conservation outcomes, while allowing for some development where permitted.

Outcomes

1. Support economic opportunities that provide benefits to local municipalities, Indigenous peoples, and all Albertans.
 - Double oil and gas production – Enable growth while reducing disturbance through restoration requirements.
 - Provide certainty for forestry aggregate harvest to reduce fragmentation and support wildfire risk management.
 - Enable development of surface materials, minerals, peat, and tourism activities in appropriate areas while minimizing environmental impacts.
2. Consolidate and manage development to support landscape intactness and self-sustaining plant and wildlife populations, with a focus on species at risk.
 - Access management – Manage road development by creating a long-term road network and increasing landscape intactness in caribou range over time.
 - Restoration requirements – Focusing on early restoration to reduce the disturbance on the landscape, especially in sensitive areas and areas important for caribou.
 - Monitoring – Ongoing assessment of species, habitat, and landscape indicators to track progress.
3. Support recreational, cultural and traditional land uses, including the practice of constitutionally recognized rights in the sub-region, for the benefit of local people, Indigenous peoples, and all Albertans.
 - Build capacity to enable Indigenous participation in the implementation of the plan.
 - Support Indigenous peoples to practice traditional land uses such as non-commercial harvest of plants and fungi for food and medicine.
 - Recreation management – Areas are prioritized for recreation and tourism activities.

Caribou range boundaries

- Caribou range boundaries show areas used by woodland caribou over time, based on historical information and satellite GPS collars.
- These boundaries have been updated over time periodically since 1985 as new information became available. The last update was in 2010 using data collected up to 2008.
- The plan is based on new caribou range boundaries that reflect everything we have learned about caribou occurrence, movement, distribution, and habitat since 2010.

Sub-region facts

- The Caribou Mountains sub-region is in northern Alberta, located north of High Level and Fort Vermillion. It borders the Northwest Territories to the north and Wood Buffalo National Park to the east.
- The Caribou Mountains sub-region is located in the Lower Peace Region, which does not have an approved plan.
- Recent amendments to the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* enable the government to establish sub-regions and approve stand alone sub-regional plans without the need for inclusion in a regional plan in these circumstances.
- The draft Caribou Mountains Sub-regional Plan and its regulatory details are proposed to be approved as a standalone plan under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* until a regional plan in this area comes into effect.
- The sub-region covers 36,700 square kilometers.
- The area includes the Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park, Alberta's second largest and northernmost wildland park.
- Petroleum and natural gas tenure covers a substantial portion of the area, and forestry tenures cover 36.1% of the sub-region.

Did you know...

- The sub-region is home to multiple at-risk species, including woodland caribou, wood bison, grizzly bears, sharp-tailed grouse, and trumpeter swans.
- There are two boreal caribou ranges located in the sub-region: Yates and Caribou Mountains.
- There are two wood bison ranges located in the sub-region: Wentzel and Garden River.

Figure 1: Map of the Caribou Mountains sub-region showing proposed zonation in the draft plan.

