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PRESS RELEASE

First Nations in north-eastern Alberta call for federal emergency order protecting woodland caribou

No further industrial development anywhere in remaining herd ranges

For immediate release

July 15, 2010 - Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation are calling on the federal government to issue an emergency order under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) protecting the full ranges of woodland caribou in north-eastern Alberta from any further industrial development.

The federal Minister of Environment is more than three years past a mandatory statutory deadline for preparing a recovery strategy for woodland caribou, which are listed as a threatened species under SARA. A recovery strategy is a key step in the conservation of any threatened species, and is required before the federal government can provide long-term protection for the remaining habitat of woodland caribou.

According to a report released today and authored by Dr. Stan Boutin, a leading caribou expert at the University of Alberta, woodland caribou are in steep decline in the area because of the cumulative effects of rampant industrial development on caribou habitat, particularly by the oil and gas industry.

According to Dr. Boutin's report, the East Side Athabasca River herd has declined by 71% since 1996 while the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range herd has declined 74% since 1998. Dr. Boutin's report notes that: "This level of decline is dramatic and it is a strong signal that drastic immediate management action is required to keep caribou from disappearing completely" in the Alberta traditional territory of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation. Dr. Boutin's recommendations include habitat restoration and full protection of remaining caribou ranges in north-eastern Alberta.

Chief Al Lameman of Beaver Lake Cree Nation said: "We are calling on government to immediately halt the destruction of our lands, lands that sustain our caribou and our people. It is difficult for me to express the anger I feel at the loss of this noble animal in our territory. Our traditional land is dwindling. We need habitat for our animals to ensure there is a healthy surplus. These animals sustain us and, as they die, our future becomes uncertain. We must act now to take care of Mother Earth."

In a strongly-worded letter sent earlier today to environment Minister Jim Prentice, the First Nations give the federal government 45 days to prepare an emergency order protecting caribou in the region.

Jack Woodward, legal counsel for the First Nations in this matter, said: "We feel a request for an emergency order is entirely reasonable, given the sharp decline in caribou and given the federal environment Minister's ongoing failure to prepare a recovery plan more than three years after expiry of

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the mandatory deadline. The federal government has tried to justify refusing to act on this obligation with the surprising claim that time is needed to consult with First Nations. With this demand we are making it clear that First Nations are not standing in the way of action – they are demanding immediate emergency protection for the caribou until long-term habitat protection is in place.”

Chief Vern Janvier of the Chipewyan Prairie Dene said: “The extinction of caribou would mean the extinction of our people. The caribou is our sacred animal; it is a measure of our way of life. When the caribou are dying, the land is dying. We see no respect from government for the caribou or for us as humans. The way Alberta is operating, profit for the oil industry is number one, and everything else can be sacrificed.”

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Contacts:

Susan Smitten, Director of Communications,
Woodward & Company - 250.383.2356

Ron Lameman, Advisor to Beaver Lake Cree Nation
BLCN office - 780.623.4549

Links:

The letter to Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice from First Nations is available on the Woodward and Company LLP website: www.woodwardandcompany.com/resources.html

Expert report on woodland caribou [*Rangifer tarandus caribou*] in the Traditional Territory of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation – Dr. Stan Boutin, July 5, 2010 -
http://woodwardandcompany.com/media/pdfs/BLCTT_-_Stan_Boutin_Report_-_5_July_2010_final.pdf

Maps of BLCN territory (oil sands leases & caribou ranges):

- Map of caribou ranges in Beaver Lake Cree traditional territory:
http://woodwardandcompany.com/media/Dr_Boutin_report_-_Map_of_caribou_ranges_in_Beaver_Lake_Traditional_Territory.pdf
- Map of Oil Sands Leases:
http://woodwardandcompany.com/media/042210_Beaver_Oilsands_Leases.png
- Map of Petroleum and Natural Gas Agreements: http://woodwardandcompany.com/media/D_-_Beaver_PNG_Agreements.png

Note to editors:

The Co-operative Bank in Manchester, UK, which provided funding for Dr. Boutin’s report, issued a press release and copy of the report on July 14, 2010. For more information, visit their website at:
<http://www.goodwithmoney.co.uk/beaverlakecree>