

BC WON'T PROTECT ENDANGERED CARIBOU HABITAT, GROUPS ASK OTTAWA TO STEP IN

PRESS RELEASE

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Vancouver. April 7, 2017. Today federal environment minister Catherine McKenna received a legal application for an emergency order to block clearcut logging in caribou habitat outside Wells Gray Provincial Park north of Kamloops BC. The logging by Canadian Forest Products Ltd. (Canfor) was approved by the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) and could begin as early as May. BC admits the caribou are “critically imperilled” but says Canfor is responsible for deciding whether to protect habitat on this provincial crown land.

“The federal government has to step in here since neither BC nor Canfor are willing to do anything,” said Trevor Goward, chair of a residents group that met repeatedly with BC forestry officials and Canfor to try to have the logging moved out of caribou habitat. “Caribou numbers are dropping like a stone and we can’t just sit back and watch this herd be pushed into extinction.”

The request for federal intervention is spearheaded by residents of the Clearwater Valley who see their area as the “gateway” to Wells Gray Provincial Park and its iconic herd of southern mountain caribou.

“The Wells Gray caribou herd is listed as endangered because the numbers have plunged from over 300 to less than 140 over the past 20 years,” said Gwen Barlee, national policy director with the Wilderness Committee. “BC talks about protecting caribou habitat, but allowing logging in critical caribou habitat is actually a recipe for extinction.”

The federal government has authority under the *Species at Risk Act* to make an emergency order where there are imminent threats to the recovery or survival of an endangered species such as the Wells Gray caribou.

Lawyer Bill Andrews, who filed the 68-page application for the coalition of residents, naturalists clubs and provincial environment groups, said “The federal government has a legal responsibility to step in where the province’s actions have not been effective in protecting an endangered species.” He added that “The Federal Court has said that the federal minister must make a decision ‘in a timely manner, bearing in mind the emergency nature of the order requested.’”

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A copy of the application for an emergency order is posted here: <https://1000clearcuts.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017-04-07-SARA-s.80-Wells-Gray-Thompson-caribou-emergency-order-application.pdf>