

NGO'S OUTRAGED AS BC GOVERNMENT ADMITS CULLING OF WOLVES IS INHUMANE, YET CONSIDERS CULL EXPANSION

For immediate release

January 20, 2017 (Golden, BC) – A recent provincial government document that recommends expanding aerial gunning of wolves, along with increased hunting of mountain lions and deer has been met with outrage by environmental and animal welfare groups. The proposal to expand culling and hunting is a misguided attempt to recover caribou herds in the Revelstoke-Shuswap region.

The document's authors, who are academic and government scientists of British Columbia's Mountain Caribou Recovery Program, admit *"There are no humane methods to directly reduce wolf numbers, but aerial removal is the only method of killing enough wolves (and entire packs) to reduce wolf densities with no risk of by-catch."*

Aerial gunning fails to comply with ethical guidelines set by the Canadian Council on Animal Care, as it is not considered an acceptable form of euthanasia. The BC government also accepts strangling snares as a killing method in this and other management plans. Research shows that many wolves killed by aerial gunning and neck snaring die a slow and excruciatingly painful death.

Gunning wolves from helicopters and using strangling snares on the ground have been the main tools used in an ongoing experiment to recover caribou herds protected by federal law. These herds were pushed to the brink of extinction not because of wolves, but due to continued destruction and fragmentation of their habitat by logging, resource extraction and motorized recreation.

Chris Genovali, executive director of Raincoast Conservation Foundation, said:

"Those involved in planning the expanded wolf and cougar kill disregard the considerable damage that scientists understand happens in ecosystems when top predators are removed, and callously exhibit an indifference to the suffering experienced by wolf families as pack members are killed."

Recommendations made a decade ago (2007) by government and independent scientists to protect 34,000 hectares of habitat to recover caribou herds in the Revelstoke-Shuswap area have been ignored and eroded so much as to become meaningless. Virginia Thompson, a resident of Revelstoke formerly associated with the Mountain Caribou Project who has been monitoring land-use plans, logging, and caribou management in her local area, explains:

"Ultimately, almost no land was retained in the Timber Harvesting Land Base in the 2007 Recovery Plan."

"We are utterly stunned to see such a backward wildlife strategy out of the BC government," said Rebecca Aldworth, executive director for Humane Society International/Canada. *"The Liberal government seems to be stuck in the 19th century as wolves are still being scapegoated at the hands of wildlife mismanagement."*

BC's caribou recovery plan is still pitched as a great conservation commitment at the sacrifice of industrial and recreational interests, yet it has never resulted in protecting sufficient habitat to support caribou in the long-term.

"Attempting to recover caribou herds that have dipped well below the critical threshold for short-term survival in habitat that can't support much growth is like trying to put humpty dumpty back together again," said Sadie Parr, executive director of Wolf Awareness Inc. *"It cannot be done! Killing predators, no matter how many, will not change this."*

Gross mismanagement of species at risk in BC, a province with no endangered species law, results in unethical culls of predators and competing species. To avoid such conservation dilemmas, the BC government must adequately protect the habitat of at-risk species in the first place.

Background Information:

There were approximately 9900ha of status quo Timber Harvesting Land Base going into the 2007 Caribou Recovery Plan. 10,000ha THLB was retained in the 2007 Recovery Plan, but 2600ha was counted from status quo retained land, leaving 7400ha of new protection. Then in 2011, a Biodiversity Amendment to the Revelstoke Higher Level Land Use Plan was invoked which allowed timber companies to log a minimum of 6,000 ha of Old Growth Management Areas as compensation for what logging was lost to caribou protection in the 2007 Recovery Plan.

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Groups endorsing media release:



- Animal Alliance of Canada – Liz White, Director
- Animal Protection Party of Canada – Jordan Reichert, BC Representative
- Bears Matter – Barb Murray, Executive Director
- Bear With Us – Mike McIntosh, Executive Director
- Born Free – Barry Kent McKay, Canadian Representative, and Senior Program Associate
- British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) - Sara Dubois, Chief Scientific Officer and Senior Manager of Scientific Programs
- Cochrane Research Institute – Clio Smeeton, Director
- Coyote Watch Canada – Lesley Sampson, Founder and Executive Director
- Earthroots – Amber Ellis, Executive Director
- Humane Society International - Rebecca Aldworth, Executive Director
- National Wolfwatcher Coalition – Nancy Warren, Executive Director
- Pacific Wild – Ian McAllister, Executive Director
- Raincoast Conservation Foundation – Chris Genovali, Executive Director
- Sierra Club BC – Bob Peart, Executive Director
- The Fur-Bearers – Lesley Fox, Executive Director
- Wilderness Committee – Gwen Barlee, Executive Director
- Wildlife Defence League – Tommy Knowles, Executive Director
- Wolf Awareness Inc. – Sadie Parr, Executive Director
- Wolf Conservation Centre – Maggie Howell Executive Director
- World Animal Protection - Beth Sharpe, Communications Director

Background documents:

Maintaining ethical standards during conservation crises:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272153185_Maintaining_ethical_standards_during_conservation_crises

Witnessing extinction: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274320654_Witnessing_extinction_-_Cumulative_impacts_across_landscapes_and_the_future_loss_of_an_evolutionarily_significant_unit_of_woodland_caribou_in_Canada