

Response Statement - Caribou, Central Mountain population

January 13, 2015

Common Name: Caribou, Central Mountain population

Scientific Name: *Rangifer tarandus*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Endangered

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Environment will undertake consultations with the governments of British Columbia and Alberta, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Caribou, Central Mountain population, should have its Schedule 1 status of Threatened to Endangered on the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act*. The Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the Caribou, Central Mountain population, to the GIC upon completion of consultations.

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: This population is endemic to Canada and occurs in 10 extant subpopulations in east-central British Columbia and west-central Alberta in and around the Rocky Mountains. The current estimate for the population is 469 mature individuals and it has declined by at least 64% over the past 3 generations. One subpopulation in central British Columbia was confirmed extirpated in 2014, and an additional one in Banff in 2010. All extant subpopulations are estimated to contain fewer than 250 mature individuals, with 4 of these having fewer than 50. Two recognized subpopulations in 2002 have since split due to lack of dispersal within former ranges. All subpopulations have experienced declines of about 60% since the last assessment in 2002, and declines continue for all but one subpopulation, which has an unknown trend. Surveys have shown consistently high adult mortality and low calf recruitment, accelerating decline rates. Threats are continuing and escalating.

Occurrence: British Columbia, Alberta

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Environment

Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:

British Columbia, Alberta

Other applicable legislation: When the species is found within national parks of Canada or other lands administered by the Parks Canada Agency, it is protected or managed under the

Canada National Parks Act or through measures or management tools available to the Parks Canada Agency under other legislation.

Conservation activities underway: Following the Designatable Unit report on caribou (COSEWIC 2011), a new population structure was proposed and accepted by COSEWIC. This resulted in the new Central Mountain population, composed of 12 subpopulations from the previous Southern Mountain population of Caribou (COSEWIC 2002). Under the previous population designatable units, the Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Canada has been posted as final on the Species at Risk Public Registry
