

CPAWS Public Survey Guide for Bistcho Lake draft Sub-Regional Plans



Caribou have waited almost 10 years for recovery plans in Alberta: Have your say in their future!

Alberta's caribou have been waiting for almost ten years for provincial range plans under Canada's Species At Risk Act (SARA) while experiencing ongoing declines and accelerated habitat loss. The Government of Alberta has released draft version of plans that include caribou ranges, as well as some land surrounding the range, in "sub-regional plans". These sub-regional plans will lay out the rules of the land, including limits, for all the industrial and recreational activities that occur within, and outside, caribou ranges in the sub-region.



photo credit: Orna Wachman

Now is your chance to let the Government of Alberta know that the future of caribou depends on strong sub-regional plans. The province is collecting public feedback on the draft sub-regional plans until May 29, 2021



Bistcho Lake

photo credit: Jeremy Williams

Bistcho Lake Sub-Regional Plan Survey Guide:

Question 1

1. If there are additional outcomes you think we should consider for the sub-regional plan, please describe them here.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

Sub-regional plans should also include tools for climate change mitigation, specifically through the protection, conservation and maintenance of carbon-rich peatlands. Protection of peatlands will store carbon and show that Alberta is a leader in tackling climate change.

Question 2

2. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting caribou and other wildlife? *

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Somewhat effective
- ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
- ☐ Somewhat ineffective
- ☐ Very ineffective.

Select a level of effectiveness that you feel is appropriate, even if it is "I don't know".

Question 3

3. Please provide detail to your answer above.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

The sub-regional plan shows it is possible to achieve federal caribou habitat requirements and introduces some management mechanisms that will minimize disturbance, if they are implemented urgently and effectively and are diligently monitored. However, the plan fails to use protected areas or conservation areas as a key tool in the Bistcho Lake sub-region, although there was a full consensus recommendation from the Task Force to explore designating an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area here. The sub-regional plan should commit to exploring a process to create an IPCA, which would provide habitat protection for caribou and elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities in land and resource management.

The proposed Access Management Plan is a strong tool because it uses strict road density limits and wetland disturbance limits for managing the road network. However, the AMP should not include plans for new access into areas of the sub-region that are currently roadless and are core areas for caribou that will be crucial for their recovery. The plan should also clearly articulate which body is responsible for enforcing these disturbance limits and reporting on the footprint.

Question 4

4. If you have other comments about supporting caribou and other species in the sub-region, add them here.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

The sub-regional plan needs to include clear timelines on when short-term roads and associated features need to be restored and a clear plan for how seismic restoration will be staged. With nearly 62,000 km of legacy seismic lines in the Bistcho Lake range, expedient restoration efforts need to be monitored, incentivized and aligned with the Access Management Plan. Protected areas such as an IPCA can be used to ensure areas treated for restoration do not become disturbed again.

Question 5

5. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting economic activities in the region? *

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Somewhat effective
- ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
- ☐ Somewhat ineffective
- ☐ Very ineffective
- ☐ I don't know.

Select a level of effectiveness that you feel is appropriate, even if it is "I don't know".

Question 6

6. Please provide detail to your answer above.

Please add your comment here...

Provide some details on why you selected the level of effectiveness for economic activities.

Question 7

7. If you have other comments about supporting economic opportunities in the sub-region, add them here.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

The plan should recognize the opportunity to support local job opportunities through significant restoration work that will be necessary in the caribou herd range.

In some areas of the plan, there is too much emphasis on economic activities, as the Access Management Plan proposes inappropriate access to portions of the sub-region that are not currently under pressure from human activities and are very important for caribou recovery. The Access Management Plan should be adjusted to remove planned short-term and long-term roads from areas that are currently free of roads and are crucial to remain intact for caribou recovery. The plan should also clearly articulate which body is responsible for enforcing these disturbance limits and reporting on the footprint. The lifting of the moratorium on the sale of mineral leases should only occur when the Access Management Plan is in place and can guide where new leases are sold.

Question 8

8. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting recreational opportunities in the region? *

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Somewhat ineffective
- ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
- ☐ Somewhat ineffective
- ☐ Very ineffective
- ☐ I don't know.

Select a level of effectiveness that you feel is appropriate, even if it is "I don't know".

Question 9

9. Please provide detail to your answer above.

Please add your comment here...

Provide some details on why you selected the level of "effectiveness" for recreational activities.

Question 10

10. If you have other comments about supporting recreational opportunities in the sub-region, add them here.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

The recreation management plan must recognize there is an optimal trail density that can support environmental outcomes, and these should be prioritized when identifying recreation management areas. There should be an emphasis on low-impact non-motorized backcountry recreation, especially around Bistcho, Thurston and Beatty Lakes, where caribou are sensitive to increases in human activities.

Question 11

11. In your opinion, how effective would this plan be at supporting Indigenous land us in the region? *

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Somewhat effective
- ☐ Neither effective nor ineffective
- ☐ Somewhat ineffective
- ☐ Very ineffective
- ☐ I don't know.

Select a level of effectiveness that you feel is appropriate, even if it is "I don't know".

Question 12

12. Please provide detail to your answer above.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

The sub-regional plan fails to mention the possibility of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) despite a recommendation from the Task Force to explore an IPCA in the region and a formal proposal for an IPCA from the Dene Tha' First Nation. Traditional land-use and Traditional Knowledge should inform land-use planning through an IPCA. The Dene Tha' First Nation have made significant progress on their vision for an IPCA in this sub-region and the sub-regional plan should commit to supporting that initiative.

Question 13

13. If you have other comments about supporting Indigenous land use in the sub-region, add them here.

Please add your comment here...

Our suggestions:

I support and encourage further collaboration with the Dene Tha' First Nation, and other Indigenous communities, through environmental monitoring programs and incorporating Indigenous Knowledge in ongoing and future planned resource management.

If you are interested in learning more about the Dene Tha' First Nation's IPCA vision, visit www.bistcholake.ca

