BACKGROUND

The Lower Athabasca Region is one of the seven land-use regions defined in Alberta’s Land-use Framework and covers approximately 93,212 km². The region is primarily known for its oil sands and commercial development that plays an important role in the economy of Alberta and Canada.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP), which was approved by Cabinet in 2012, commits the government to complete a landscape management plan as a key management action to achieve the biodiversity outcomes for the region. For more information on LARP:

https://landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/LowerAthabascaRegion/Pages/default.aspx

Some of the key pressures on biodiversity in the region include:

- natural disturbances;
- human-made disturbances or footprint that result in habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation

PURPOSE OF THE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Landscape Management Plan (LMP) is being developed from an integrated resource management perspective and will align with the caribou range planning that overlaps with the area under the plan.

The primary intent of the LMP is to manage the extent and duration of land disturbance and development footprint to achieve biodiversity outcomes. Specifically, the LMP will aim to:

- Improve biodiversity performance: Avoiding intact landscapes; minimizing the footprint necessary to develop resources; and/or, restoring legacy disturbance and enhancing reclamation.
- Incorporate specific provisions from existing Integrated Resource Plans (IRP) within the Lower Athabasca Region to ensure alignment with LARP implementation.
- Ensure continued access to resources and tenure to support the economic and social outcomes in LARP.
- Guide future decision-making based on application of the most effective policy instruments, including zoning, disturbance limits and consideration of the potential role of conservation offsets.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTENT

The LMP will provide direction and guidance on:

- Strategies to reduce new footprint
- Access management
- Priority areas for restoration of existing footprint

RELATIONSHIP WITH CARIBOU RANGE PLANS

Woodland caribou play an integral part of the province’s biodiversity and a healthy northern ecosystem. The Lower Athabasca Region overlaps with five woodland caribou ranges:

- Red Earth Range
- Richardson Range
- West Side Athabasca Range
- East Side Athabasca Range
- Cold Lake Range

In developing caribou range plans, Alberta Environment and Parks is striving to balance social and economic interests and environmental values. We are committed to ensuring that industrial activity allows for the persistence of caribou populations.

Caribou range plans must outline how the habitat condition within a given range will be managed over time and space to ensure that critical habitat for boreal caribou is protected, and that each local population will either continue to be self-sustaining or become self-sustaining over time.

Range plans will differ from the LMP in that they will directly address provision of critical habitat for caribou. Further, they will address the whole of each range, not all of which overlap the Landscape Management Plan area.

The LMP will explore ways to advance caribou recovery through focused restoration and best management practices. The objectives of the LMP and the Caribou Range plans are similar in some aspects; however, the LMP will take a broader look at the overall biodiversity and social, economic and environmental objectives. A coordinated approach will be taken to assure alignment between the two planning initiatives.

Alberta Environment and Parks will ensure that the preparation of these plans will offer First Nation, Métis and stakeholders opportunities to engage in the development of regional initiatives and plans, as well as ensuring that the resulting plans complement each other.

CONTACT US:

To learn more about the land management plan, caribou range planning in Alberta and how you can participate, please visit www.talkaep.alberta.ca/caribou-range-planning or contact us by email at AEP.Caribouplanning@gov.ab.ca
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