RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COLD LAKE PLANNING AREA

Advice to the Government of Alberta provided by the
Northeast Caribou Sub-regional Task Force







cover photo credits clockwise from top left

Aerial photo, Elston Dzus, Task Force Member
Imperial Oil's Resources Cold Lake Operations, Lori Neufeld, Task Force Member
Cold Lake Canada Day Celebrations, Craig Copeland, Task Force Member
Fish Smoking, Fin MacDemid, Task Force Member
Cold Lake OHV Trails, Garett Schmidt, Task Force Member
Loon displaying, Monica Dahl, GoA Task Force Support Team
Lakeland Provincial Park, Alberta Wilderness Association

Note, this document is advice to the Government of Alberta. This advice considered existing Government of Alberta policies and information provided by Government of Alberta staff. The Government of Alberta's views and intentions may not necessarily coincide with the recommendations of the Northeast Caribou Sub-regional Task Force.

May 2020

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Message from the Chair

Alberta's environment, including our rich landscapes, diverse biodiversity and plentiful resources, has supported generations of Albertans. Last fall, the Government of Alberta (GoA) established three task forces to provide recommendations to inform the development of sub-regional plans. These plans will plot a course that prioritizes a healthy environment and healthy communities now and for future generations to enjoy. As chair, I believe all members of the Northeast Caribou Sub-regional Task Force (Task Force) share this vision and integrated it into their discussions and recommendations. I am proud of the work that we accomplished, and I believe the recommendations we put forward demonstrate how we can come together, find common ground respecting different perspectives and develop solutions that work.

With only five months to develop recommendations, the Northeast Task Force was given a challenge that we faced head-on. While not an easy task for any multi-stakeholder group in normal circumstances, Task Force members understood the importance of getting it right, within the time allotted, and I thank them for their commitment.

The Task Force consisted of 15 individuals representing a wide range of sectors, communities, Indigenous groups and activities on the land. While the Task Force doesn't replace government's intention to engage and/or consult with Indigenous groups and stakeholders on a plan, each member was responsible for representing their respective constituency, and bringing their perspective. Caribou recovery efforts have been ongoing for decades. Our most recent effort, and its emphasis on Task Force members working with their constituencies, resulted in recommendations that balance social, economic and environmental interests. Sustainable development, including caribou recovery and respect for the environment, is important to me personally and was a key reason I accepted Minister Nixon's request to chair the Task Force. Task Force members worked with courage and conviction to hear each other and adapt approaches in an effort to find recommendations on common ground. Reaching consensus should not be taken for granted in a multi-stakeholder process. Our achievements as a Task Force demonstrate the innovative and collaborative spirit of Albertans to work together at finding creative solutions.

The incredible diversity of perspectives on the Task Force meant we developed our recommendations with recognition of the importance of the sub-region's socio-economic drivers, and we did not take lightely the proposals to change how we manage associated land uses while protecting the environment. I believe these recommendations are an important step toward reducing red tape for industry and improving investor confidence in economic opportunities in Alberta while we work toward our goals of caribou recovery. As a Task Force, we recognize the importance of improving on how we manage our lands to enable economic development, recreational and Indigenous opportunities, and environmental sustainability. This holistic approach should help ensure future generations can enjoy the environmental, economic and social benefits of our lands and resources. Simply put, these recommendations are made by Albertans to inform an Alberta-made solution to land-use planning that supports caribou recovery outcomes.

I want to thank all Task Force members for their contributions and dedication to this process. Developing recommendations is the first step in drafting a sub-regional plan for the Cold Lake area, and I believe our Task Force has put the province on the right path.

MLA David Hanson
Chair of the Northeast Caribou Sub-regional Task Force

Executive Summary

The GoA is taking a holistic approach to caribou recovery planning through the use of sub-regional plans, aligning the geographic scope and impetus for planning initiatives with local peoples' understanding and use of our landscapes.

In the fall 2019, the Task Force was one of three task forces established to develop recommendations to inform the development of a sub-regional plan. These task forces, Chaired by a member of the legislative assembly, were unique in the scope of participants and included representatives from First Nations, Métis groups, municipalities, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), the forest industry, the energy industry, trappers, motorized recreation groups, and other landusers. Their purpose was to develop recommendations that:

- address caribou recovery priorities, including working toward achieving and maintaining naturally self-sustaining caribou populations over the long term,
- consider multi-species conservation,
- consider any socio-economic opportunities and impacts for the area,
- consider recreational pursuits and other societal interests, and
- consider impacts on the exercise of treaty rights and traditional uses.

Northeast Caribou Sub-regional Task Force

The Task Force developed recommendations to inform the development of a sub-regional plan for the Cold Lake sub-region. To guide its recommendations, the Task Force identified a set of sub-regional outcomes to define the Task Force's shared vision for the future state of this sub-region. These outcomes span five main themes – caribou recovery priorities, multi-species conservation, Indigenous, economy and recreation/tourism – in alignment with the objectives in its terms of reference.

Throughout the Task Force process, which took place between November 2019 and April 2020, task force members received presentations from government subject matter experts covering a variety of values and interests on the landscape, including energy, forestry, recreation, tourism and economic development as well future landscape scenario modelling and caribou conservation. The ongoing connection to subject matter experts and the support from across government informed the Task Force's work and created a solid foundation from which to build recommendations that were aligned with broader land-use management mandates for different departments.Working groups, established by the Task Force and led by Task Force members, drafted recommendations. Subject matter experts in the GoA supported these groups, which were primarily comprised of Task Force members. When reviewing, editing and approving recommendations, the Task Force employed a consensus model for decision-making. This allowed members to differentiate their level of consensus and non-consensus, so members could express their support or concern in a constructive manner. The approach, while new to many, was a unique feature of the Task Force process and was important to help move discussions forward. Below is a summary from the Task Force on the work being presented in this document, in fulfillment of their commitments in the terms of reference.

Overview of Our Work

Our recommendations strive to achieve a balance that enables the development of a subregional plan that outlines a future with working landscapes[1] while enabling caribou conservation and recovery. Our Task Force recognizes that caribou recovery must be an integral part of this sub-regional plan. We also recognize that having a strong economy that supports local communities is important, and not mutually exclusive with caribou recovery. Alberta's jurisdiction over its resources and development is critical to supporting strong and vibrant local communities, and protecting the environment. In the short and medium term, caribou conservation and recovery requires that Alberta use a combination of habitat management and wildlife population management actions. The recommendations are a comprehensive, inter-related suite of advice and should be view collectively, rather than a set of options from which to pick and choose. Our recommendations provide advice to the GoA as to which combination of actions to consider in the sub-region.

Recommendations Table

As a Task Force, we are providing 41 recommendations as advice to the Minister to support the development of a sub-regional plan specific to the Cold Lake sub-region. Recommendations 1-25 focus on advice to Energy, Forestry and other industries in the sub-region. Recommendations 26-32 focus on advice for managing caribou populations and multi-species conservation. Recommendations 33-39 focus on advice for recreation and tourism. Recommendations 40-41 present advice for additional values on the land in the sub-region. The Task Force has identified the importance of supporting Indigenous peoples ability to participate in local economies and the continued ablility to exercise Treaty rights, Metis Harvesting, and traditional land uses within a sub-regional plan through a number of recommendations provided.

In our final meeting in April 2020, we discussed 41 recommendations, of which 39 had consensus. Where consensus was not reached, we identified which sectors were in non-consensus and provided details for the non-consensus. We believe our work provides guidance to create a sub-regional plan that will support both a working landscape and caribou recovery. These recommendations reflect the collective vision that we have for the sub-region, and if implemented together, will achieve that vision.

[1] Working landscape: An area of land managed for multiple environmental, social and economic objectives. These objectives include environmental conservation, as well as human use for social and economic values. Provincial Woodland Caribou Range Plan, 2017.

Background

The Cold Lake sub-regional planning area is located in northeast Alberta (Figure 1). Its boundaries span from the Cowper Lake Access Road in the north to the Beaver River in the south, and from the Saskatchewan border in the east to Lac La Biche in the west. It includes part of Lac La Biche County, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and the Municipal District of Bonnyville, and encompasses the Cold Lake Air Weapons range and several provincial parks. The Cold Lake Sub-regional Planning Area intersects with Treaty 6, Treaty 8 and Treaty 10 lands, and is of importance for a number of Indigenous communities including First Nations, Metis Settlements and Métis locals in Alberta. Further, this sub-region is an important area for exercising treaty rights, Métis harvesting and traditional land uses. Not only is this sub-region important for its natural resources, it also has significant cultural and spiritual importance.

The sub-region is well known for its forests and wetlands and the variety of wildlife species, including the threatened Woodland Caribou[2]. These species and spaces are important resources for local communities, Indigenous traditional land uses and tourism. As of 2016, approximately 45 per cent of the sub-region was unaffected by human footprint[3].

Within the boundaries of this sub-region are the Cold Lake caribou range and the Christina component of the East Side of the Athabasca River (ESAR). As of 2012, the amount of undisturbed[4] habitat in the Cold Lake and Christina component of the ESAR ranges was 9 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively. Accordingly, caribou conservation and recovery has been, and continues to be, an important part of the sub-regional planning outcomes. Linear feature restoration in the sub-region (primarily historic seismic lines), initiated and funded by both industrial groups and the GoA, has led to over 1,400 kilometers being treated through a variety of access management and silvicultural techniques (Cold Lake:1340 km, Christina: 189 km). While progress on restoration has been made, there remains a need for additional restoration within the sub-region.

Parts of this sub-region are rich in natural resources (for example, oil, gas and timber), and are significant contributors to the local and provincial economies. Oilsands tenure covers 49 per cent of the sub-region, producing approximately 900 thousand barrels per day (bbl/d) of bitumen. This production accounts for just under a third of the province's total production of three million bbl/d, and is responsible for over 29,000 direct and indirect province-wide jobs. The economic activity generated from oil sands operations contributes millions in taxes to local municipal districts and counties. Petroleum and natural gas (PNG) tenure underlies 45 per cent of the sub-region, with gas production contributing approximately 2.3 per cent of the provincial total (2018)[5].

[2] Listed as threatened under the Provincial Wildlife Act in 1997 and as a species at risk under the Federal *Species at Risk Act* in 2003

[3] Calculation considers the area within 200m of human footprint to be affected

[4] Calculation considers the area within 500m of human footprint to be affected for Caribou

[5] Data provided by Alberta Energy.

The forest industry provides a significant source of employment and revenue to the sub-region. With approximately 32 per cent of the sub-region covered by forestry tenure (28 per cent Forest Management Area (FMA) and embedded quota tenure, and 4 per cent Community Timber Program), approximately 450 direct jobs and 1,200 supporting jobs are related to forest harvest in the sub-region. These jobs account for approximately $63 million in local employment income[6].

Tourism and recreation are important to the local economy and social well-being of the sub-region. There are six provincial recreation areas, two provincial parks, one Wildland Park and one provincial land recreation trail in the sub-region. These areas provide Albertans with a variety of opportunities to enjoy the natural environment and help protect biodiversity in the sub-region.

Cold Lake Multi-stakeholder Working Group

In June 2018, before establishing the Task Force, the provincial government established a multi-stakeholder working group to draft a caribou range plan for the Cold Lake caribou range. The goal of this work was to develop a plan that met the caribou habitat objectives outlined in the federal recovery strategy[7] under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Based on multi-sector inputs, future footprint and habitat condition were modelled under various management approaches. This modelling allowed the group to demonstrate that, by using specific management strategies along with active restoration of legacy footprint, significant progress could be made to meeting the objectives for caribou habitat within the Cold Lake Caribou range, while maintaining a working landscape. Several Task Force members were part of this earlier multi-stakeholder working group and brought this work forward for consideration when developing recommendations for the sub-region. The work done by this working group was important in helping the Task Force move through discussions on recommendations for the sub-region.

[6] Data provided by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.
[7] https://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/plans/rs_caribou_boreal_caribou_0912_e1.pdf

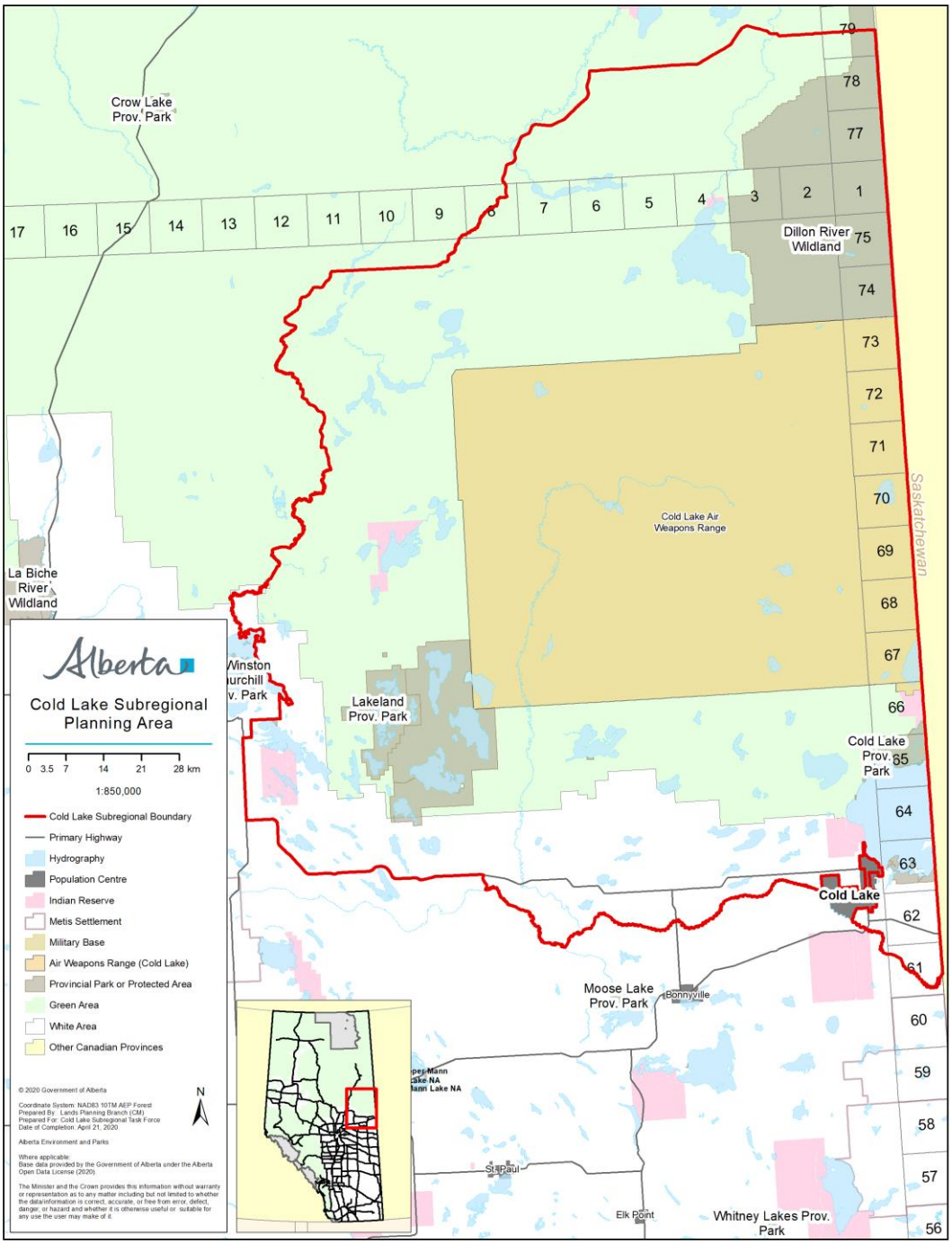

Figure 1. Map of Cold Lake Sub-Region

The Task Force

Task Force Mandate

The Government of Alberta committed to taking a holistic approach to caribou recovery, ensuring the inclusion of stakeholders and local communities, and consideration of socio-economic impacts as part of the process.

The Northeast Caribou Sub-Regional Task Force was one of three Minister-appointed multi-stakeholder Task Forces, convened in November 2019, tasked with providing advice and recommendations to the GoA to inform the development of sub-regional plans. To ensure the recommendations reflect the variety of interests and values on the landscape, membership included individuals who live, work, recreate and/or have an interest in the region.

The terms of reference directed the Task Force to deliberate and provide recommendations that meet the following objectives:

- address caribou recovery priorities, including working toward achieving and maintaining naturally self-sustaining caribou populations over the long term,
- consider multi-species conservation,
- consider any socio-economic opportunities and impacts for the area,
- consider recreational pursuits and other societal interests, and
- consider impact on the exercise of Treaty rights and traditional uses.

Task Force members met in six multi-day, facilitated meetings over the course of six months, with a transition to an online format due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members reviewed material provided by various GoA ministries and adopted a consensus model for deliberating recommendations (Appendix B). Throughout this process, subject matter experts from the ministries of Alberta Energy, Agriculture and Forestry, Indigenous Relations, and Economic Development, Trade and Tourism were present and available to support discussions when needed. At the end of this process, the Task Force developed 41 recommendations for the GoA's consideration. These recommendations provide stakeholder advice to the GoA.

Members of the Task Force

Sub-regional plans consider multiple values specific to a land base, including Indigenous traditional land use, industrial land use, recreational land use, military use in the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, multi-species conservation, caribou recovery and adjacent area land uses, such as existing protected areas.

To ensure the recommendations considered the vast and varied perspectives of the sub-region, the Task Force included representation from a diverse group of stakeholders. The Task Force included representatives from local governments, Indigenous groups, the energy sector, the forestry sector, trappers, motorized recreational groups, ENGOs and other local stakeholders and knowledge holders (Table 1).

Several government ministries, including the federal Department of National Defence (DND), supported the Task Force to ensure broad consideration of information and that the Task Force had the facts on the local area including its economy, environment and communities.

Table 1. Task Cold Lake Sub-Region Task Force Members

Organization	Task Force Member
Task Force Chair	MLA David Hanson
Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA)	Ben Secker
Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Ltd.	Elston Dzus
Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA)	Soren Odegard
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)	Craig Copeland
Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA)	Carolyn Campbell
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Northern Alberta	Gillian Chow-Fraser
Alberta Trappers Association (ATA)	Vic Toutant *Alternate:* Bill Abercrombie
Canadian Energy Pipeline Association (CEPA)	Jennifer Barker
Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations	Eddie Cardinal *Alternate:* Fin MacDermid
Confederacy of Treaty 8 First Nations	Ralphie Cardinal
Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA)	Lyle Lawrence *Alternate:* Pam Billey
Metis Settlements General Council	Archie Handel *Alternate:* Maery Kaplan-Hallan
Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association	Garett Schmidt
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)	Nick Gafuik
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)	Lori Neufeld
Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP)	Brian Makowecki

Recommendations

Sub-regional Outcomes

To help guide the development of recommendations, Task Force members discussed their vision for the sub-region and developed outcomes that were most important to them and their sector or communities. These outcomes were categorized into four broad topics: 1) economic, 2) recreation and tourism, 3) Indigenous and 4) caribou and multi-species. The task force then prioritized these outcomes to help focus the development of its recommendations. In total, 18 outcomes were determined to be priorities (Appendix A).

Working Groups

At the request of the Task Force, four working groups were established to draft recommendations to support the priority outcomes for specific areas: 1) energy and forestry, 2) recreation, tourism and Indigenous, 3) caribou and multi-species, and 4) other values on the landscape. Task force members self-selected which working group they participated in, and identified external subject matter experts to include.

One or two Task Force members acted as working group leads and were responsible for ensuring the working group met its Task Force-identified mandate. One GoA planner also supported each group. Working groups worked between Task Force meetings to advance the drafting of recommendations. More details on each of the working groups, including their mandate and membership, is provided below.

Energy and Forestry Working Group

Two Task Force members from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) and one member from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) co-led the Energy and Forestry Working Group. The group included eight Task Force members and six non-members, as well as additional GoA subject matter experts and cross-ministry support. The Task Force directed the working group to develop recommendations to support eight priority outcomes and to consider two others.

Recreation, Tourism and Indigenous Working Group

The Task Force member from the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association and one member from AEP co-led the Recreation, Tourism and Indigenous working group. The group included eight members from the Task Force, as well as additional GoA subject matter experts and cross-ministry support. The working group focused on developing recommendations to support six priority outcomes, and developed recommendations for the broader Task Force's consideration.

Caribou and Multi-Species Working Group

The Task Force member from Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries and the member from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Association co-led the Caribou and Multi-Species Working Group. The group included a total of five members from the Task Force and one non-member, with additional support from GoA

subject matter experts. The working group focused on developing recommendations to support four priority outcomes, and developed recommendations for the broader Task Force's consideration.

Other Values on the landscape Working Group

The Task Force member from Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries and the member from the Alberta Wilderness Association co-led the Other values on the landscape Working Group. The group included a total of four members from the Task Force, with additional support from GoA subject matter experts. The working group focused on developing recommendations to address key economic landuse values beyond the sub-regions domininant economic landuses of oil and gas productions and forestry.

Review of 2017 Draft Woodland Caribou Provincial Range Plan

As part of its mandate from the Minister, the Task Force reviewed the management approaches proposed in the Draft Provincial Woodland Caribou Range Plan[8], in the context of the Cold Lake sub-region. The purpose of this review was threefold:

1. to identify management approaches that may be relevant to this sub-regional planning process,
2. to identify management approaches that require additional considerations as part of the sub-regional planning process, and
3. to identify management approaches that are not applicable to this sub-region.

Comments in the Task Force report are not endorsement, or opposition, to the draft range plan. They simply provide a perspective on what was, and was not, of value for achieving its mandate. Below is a summary of the more detailed work provided to GoA.

Summary of Review

The Task Force reviewed 39 management approaches. For the purpose of this summary, these management approaches are grouped in to the four areas, with the associated sections of the 2017 Draft Provincial Range Plan provided in parenthesis. A table of the management approaches reviewed can be found in appendix C.

Management approaches related to major land-use activities in the Cold Lake Sub-region
(sections 3.2-3.5; 17 of the 39 strategies reviewed)

Many of the approaches in this section are relevant to this sub-regional planning process and were brought forward in the Task Force's sub-regional planning work (total of 10). A few management approaches require additional considerations and merit rethinking as part of the sub-regional planning process, notabley the proposed concepts for appended development and zonation. Other management approaches were not applicable to this sub-region, or were described at a level of detail beyond the Task Force's work.

[8] https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/932d6c22-a32a-4b4e-a3f5-cb2703c53280/resource/3fc3f63a-0924-44d0-b178-82da34db1f37/download/draft-caribourangeplanandappendices-dec2017.pdf

Management approaches relating to other land-use activities
(sections 3.6-3.9; 8 of 39 strategies)

The management approach in this section that applied to activities occurring in the sub-region are relevant to this sub-regional planning process. The Task Force's work did not single out each of these land-use activities, but provides guidance through a set of recommendations that apply to all land uses.

Management approaches relating to conservation areas and population management
(sections 3.11 & 5.0; 5 of 39 strategies)

All management approaches in this section are relevant to this sub-regional planning process and are addressed in the Task Force recommendations. The Task Force also provided additional approaches for wildlife population management.

Management approaches relating to natural disturbance, monitoting and reporting
(sections 3.10, 6.0 and 7.0, 9 of 39 strategies)

All management approaches in this section are relevant to this sub-regional planning process, and the Task Force's recommendations addressed some (monitoring). Others are important principles of sub-regional plan development and addressed by the Task Force in its preface to the recommendation (adaptive management). Management approaches that were not addressed within this section in the Task Force work, are still important in the sub-regional planning process, but the Task Force had not discussed them in detail (reporting and wildfire management).

Socio-economic Considerations

A key commitment of the GoA's approach to sub-regional planning is to understand the socio-economics of the proposed plan. Stakeholders and communities need to know and understand the potential impacts and opportunities of land-use approaches. The Task Force highlighted this in particular, due to the significant economic contributions the sub-region provides to the local and provincial economies.

As part of its mandate, the Task Force identified socio-economic considerations to include as part of the socio-economic assessment of the sub-regional plan. This includes identifying socio-economic considerations in recommendations and directly with the consultant the GoA retained. The Task Force's mandate was not to review socio-economic scenarios modeled on the basis of its recommendations, but rather to understand how the assessment will be conducted and help identify potential data gaps or where indicators may be missing. This feedback will help ensure the GoA completes and considers a thorough socio-economic assessment in the development of the sub-regional plan. Sectors represented on the Task Force would like the opportunity to review socio-economic implications of scenarios arising from the forthcoming sub-regional plan.

The consultants retained by the GoA to complete the socio-economic impact assessment for the Cold Lake Sub-regional Plan – Nichols Applied Management (Nichols) and North Raven Consulting (North Raven) - attended several Task Force meetings. Nichols and North Raven's participation in these meetings included delivering several presentations on the socio-economic impact analysis of sub-regional planning. In brief, the presentations provided an overview of their intended approach, potential effect pathways, key indicators, data sources and potential stakeholder groups. Each presentation was followed

by a question and answer sessions and, in some cases, a group discussion. Key feedback the Task Force provided in these sessions included the following:

- The socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) should include a cumulative effects analysis that reflects the impacts to companies or communities that are affected by multiple range plans.
    - The boundaries of the sub-region do not line up with tenure boundaries (neither forestry nor energy sector). This disconnect will create challenges for company-specific impact assessment.
- The characterization of the existing (or baseline) conditions in communities or of firms should not be limited to just a snapshot in time (for example, today) but should acknowledge the state of the world before any restrictions related to range planning. Furthermore, when characterizing the baseline scenario, it is important to consider the variability in the business cycle and related elements (for example, commodity prices) as well as other sources of uncertainty (for example, climate change legislation, automation trends).
- Understanding the potential impacts of a federal emergency protection order under SARA.
- The SEIA should consider the benefit of a healthy environment to residents of the region.
- The SEIA should consider the potential impact on the enterprise value of affected firms.
- To the degree possible, nuanced analysis reflecting operational or management responses to range planning (for example, shift change at a mill, change in log quality) is necessary to understand how range planning will affect industry.
    - Further engagement between the SEIA consultants and the various interested and affected parties will further refine the quantitative and qualitative approaches for the SEIA to best reflect implications of various management alternatives.
- The SEIA should incorporate traditional knowledge sources and activities. Interviews with trappers and other land users should explore traditional land use and culture.
    - In many cases, impacts to Indigenous communities can be under-reported or under-represented because data is limited, or it is difficult to quantify traditional land uses.
    - It will be important to engage Indigenous communities to assist in the assessment of impacts to the communities.
- The SEIA should highlight effects to Indigenous businesses.

Recommendations

The Task Force's recommendations are meant to address the range of activities, interests and values in the Cold Lake sub-region. As such, these recommendations reflect the collective vision the Task Force members have for the sub-region, and will enable achievement of that vision if implemented together.

The contributions of working group leads, Task Force members, and each working group was integral to our success. This report would not be what it is without their efforts and a collective willingness to pursue and engage in discussions to create shared understandings and find acceptable solutions. It is because of the commitment of each individual Task Force member, and the representation of diverse sectors, that we believe these recommendations represent a diversity of Albertans' interests.

Key Assumptions

While working together to develop outcomes and recommendations, the Task Force discussed and agreed upon a set of **assumptions that became a foundation for our conversations and proposed recommendations**.

The following assumptions provide important context for our recommendations:

- In the Cold Lake sub-region, it is possible to have a working landscape that enables caribou recovery to naturally self-sustaining levels and supports maintenance of the natural range of variation of other species where economic, recreational and Indigenous traditional land uses are pursued.
- Having a strong economy that supports local communities is also important, and not mutually exclusive with caribou recovery. Ultimately these recommendations aim to achieve a balance that enables the development of a sub-regional plan that will outline a future with working landscapes while enabling caribou conservation and recovery.
- There is urgency to address caribou recovery through an Alberta-made sub-regional plan that addresses both provincial and federal concerns.
- Our goal is to create a defensible and implementable sub-regional plan the federal government will accept as enabling caribou recovery.
- In our Task Force work, we agree that we will reach our goal of drafting recommendations to create a sub-regional plan that supports both a working landscape and caribou recovery, and we accept that doing so will require trade-offs and compromise. The Task Force membership is the right mix of people and interests and collectively has the knowledge, skills and sufficient access to tools and information to make concrete recommendations that result in a sub-regional plan that supports:
    - sustainable communities, economy, recreation and Indigenous traditional land uses, and
    - caribou recovery to naturally self-sustaining levels.
- Technology, innovation and best management practices continue to advance in ways that reduce negative impacts of development on the landscape.

Task Force members had the responsibility to represent and work with their sectors to ensure the recommendations considered a broad range of perspectives. While our recommendations reflect these other interests to the best of our ability, we recognize the need for engagement and/or consultation with Indigenous groups, stakeholders and the public on the Cold Lake Sub-regional Plan to ensure that others have an opportunity to understand and provide input on the plan. Our Task Force members are confident the GoA will engage with stakeholders and consult Indigenous peoples on a draft plan based upon our recommendations.

The Task Force understands that any sub-regional plan developed from these recommendations will be evaluated and updated as new information or situations emerge. Adaptive management, including monitoring, evaluation and adaptation, will be part of this iterative process, including the review and update of the plan every five to 10 years.

Recommendations for the Cold Lake Sub-regional planning area

NOTE: "**Considerations**" under each recommendation are **key supplements to the recommendation** and aim to facilitate the work of planners in what should be considered when addressing the recommendation in the sub-regional plan (e.g. specific groups to involve, possible approaches to consider, current work to link to, or past work to learn from).

1. Develop a spatially explicit sub-regional access management plan to minimize anthropogenic footprint

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Access management planning supports access to resources while minimizing the extent and duration of footprint. • Supports creation of larger intact areas for caribou and caribou habitat restoration. • Ensures access for future development considers objectives for caribou. • Increased collaboration on access and spatial planning between resource users will reduce the footprint of development (especially for access roads) and edge effects from development and foster development of a recreational trail network.	• Targeted timeframe needed; however, the tighter you make the timeline the more challenging it will be to engage Indigenous communities and the public in a meaningful way. • Multi-stakeholder engagement in strategy and plan development is needed. • A specific effort by Alberta needs to be made to work with the DND Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Environment (ADMIE) on planning within the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR). • To restore un-needed features, we must first identify needed features. • Ensure access within important habitat areas is avoided. • Incorporate recreation tourism and indigenous values into the regional access strategies.	ECON-04, 04b, 07, 13, 17, 18 CMS-13

2. Develop an Integrated Land Management System for Regulator and industrial land-users to coordinate future development and retirement of access

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Access management planning can ensure access to resources while minimizing the extent and duration of human footprint. • An ILM System will support reduction of habitat fragmentation by minimzing the amount, distribution and duration of human (industrial) footprint in meaningful space and time. • The current ILM process depends on companies to contact and coordinate amongst themselves, with limited consistency. • A functioning ILM system is: a working operations-level information system for use by regulators who issue/manage energy tenure and land dispositions (including Alberta Energy, AEP, AAF, AER), so that they can foresee and manage cumulative land disturbance of cross-ministry tenure, dispositions and access, in accordance with the approved caribou range plan.	• Could support a move to a single regulatory body for roads.	ECON-13

3. Develop a caribou range plan that spatially identifies future resource development and prioritized restoration and temporally demonstrates progress towards 65% undisturbed habitat

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• There have been a seemingly endless series of delays on caribou range planning that have contributed to uncertainty for industry. • Current caribou distribution in Cold Lake indicates that caribou do not use the range homogenously, and have formed subgroups that only use small portions of the range. Disturbance in areas consistently used by subgroups will likely have negative impacts on the Cold Lake caribou population. • Planning of where, when and how much resource development will occur within the Cold Lake and Christina caribou ranges in the future will allow for greater certainty of access to resources, coordinated access management, efficient restoration treatment, and the identification of areas that prioritize the recovery of caribou and other species.	• Stakeholders will need to identify future resource development areas over a timeframe that is long enough to be meaningful for caribou recovery. • Oil and gas development on the landscape in the sub-region is driven by many variables including quantity, quality, depth and configuration of resource in place; regulatory approvals; mineral tenure; distance to infrastructure; technological innovation; future energy prices; future public policy and access to markets. Prediction based on any one of these variables is subject to uncertainty, and this uncertainty increases with both the number of variables considered, and the long-time horizons involved in caribou range planning. Therefore, development projections and the associated spatial/temporal depictions, must be considered conceptual for the purposes of high-level landscape management planning.	ECON-04,13,1718 CMS-09, 13, 18

4. Develop collaborative agreements with GoA and tenure holders to maintain and conserve existing caribou habitat and provide priority areas for restoration through company specific development agreements that include voluntary oil sands lease deferrals and/or voluntary relinquishment

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Development agreements will conserve ecologically valuable areas for caribou while allowing for continuation of environmentally responsible development activities, benefit other species, and contribute to creation of large tracts of undisturbed habitat over time. • In order to deliver value to Albertans, shareholders and investors, the energy industry needs the ability to develop its mineral tenure in alignment with each company's corporate priorities. • Deferrals and relinquishments will support progress towards achieving 65% undisturbed habitat within caribou ranges.	• Company initiated bilateral discussions with AEP and Alberta Energy would be the mechanism to implement voluntary initiatives. • The areas subject to long term deferrals may be contemplated as candidates for restoration where practical. • Ensure that areas of caribou habitat that meet the biophysical requirements outlined in the caribou recovery strategy are prioritized. • Areas within the Cold Lake and Christina caribou ranges that are currently utilized by caribou could be candidate areas for deferral and/or relinquishment.	ECON-13, 17, 18 CMS-09, 13, 18

5. The Cold Lake Sub-regional Plan should recognize the economic value of the sub-region through a working landscape approach

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The Cold Lake Sub-Region is an oil & gas producing region of provincial and national significance. Production from the sub-region in 2018 was 24% of Alberta (~860,000 barrels/day), comprising 37% of the royalties (over $1 billion) that were paid to the Crown. • The oil sands companies that operate in the sub-region contributed over $33 million in municipal taxes to Lac La Biche County and over $53 million in municipal taxes to MD Bonnyville in 2018. Improvement District 349 collected over $35 million in tax revenues in 2017[i]. • Capital and operating expenditures by the oil and gas companies who operate in the sub-region in 2018 resulted in over 29,000 direct and indirect province-wide jobs. • Forests (outside of the CLAWR) provide fiber supply to two saw mils and one pulp mill; close proximity to the mills makes this area very important from an economic perspective.	• Explore strategic approaches for all industries to be on the landscape. • A working landscape ensures ongoing development of current and approved oil sands projects in the Cold Lake sub-region and enables future sub-surface development of bitumen mineral resources. • First Nations and Métis are in support of economy diversification. • The upstream oil and natural gas industry is one of many land users within the Cold Lake Caribou Range and is well-positioned as a partner in recovery; however, their capacity to contribute to caribou recovery depends upon remaining a vibrant, thriving, and competitive industry.	ECON-04, 04b

[i] *Natural Resources Canada, ESTMA reporting (Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act).* *https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/our-natural-resources/minerals-mining/mining-resources/extractive-sector-transparency-m/links-estma-reports/18198*

6. Manage forests outside of caribou range based on a multi-species/Ecosystem-based Management (EBM) Approach

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Multi-species, ecosystem-based approach can maintain habitat for species with varying biophysical needs through time and space.	• Many EBM provisions already implemented through Forest Management Plan, Operational Ground Rules, and 3rd-party certification (for example. Forest Stewardship Council). • Could implement aspects of the EBM approach within caribou range as well.	CMS-13, ECON-18

7. Across the sub-region: Support boreal wetland retention by promoting knowledge of the diversity of boreal wetlands and advancing the application of best practices of avoidance/minimization of impacts to wetlands

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Boreal wetland systems represent a significant portion of the land base throughout the Cold Lake Sub-region. They are highly interconnected and help buffer the landscape from both droughts and flooding events. The diversity of fens, bogs, swamps and their values are little understood, as are best practices for avoiding and minimizing impacts.	• Engage Ducks Unlimited Canada to foster / implement best management practises when operating in/across wetlands.	ECON-13, 18 CMS-13

8. Ensure Alberta's actions for caribou recovery are properly monitored and evaluated using landscape level indicators and metrics

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Monitoring is needed to properly implement adaptive management approach. • Allows for improving the plan in a structured and disciplined way over time in response to better data and understanding.	Two parts to monitoring: • Monitoring the effectiveness of the recovery that we undertake. • Monitoring success of implementation – this would include monitoring success of implementing of ILM.	ECON-13 CMS-01, 09

9. Manage disturbance (avoidance, minimization and restoration) at the scale of the Cold Lake sub-region to achieve and maintain a minimum of 65% of undisturbed caribou critical habitat over time and space, and provide adequate biophysical habitat, for survival and recovery of Christina and Cold Lake caribou

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Current habitat conditions in the Cold Lake caribou range and Christina caribou sub-range are not adequate to support self-sustaining caribou populations. Amount and location of future footprint should be carefully managed towards the federal 65% non-disturbance objectives, but this should not be a prohibition on new activity until that point. • Reduction of industrial footprint will help Alberta reach the federal recovery goal of minimum 65% undisturbed habitat in caribou ranges. Non-consensus Recommendation *Needed to move towards consensus*: Prefer to return to a recommendation that would say **"**Manage disturbance (avoidance, minimization and restoration) in the Cold Lake caribou range to achieve and maintain a minimum of 65% of the overall range as undisturbed habitat over time and space and prioritize adequate biophysical habitat for caribou survival and recovery, and manage disturbance towards a minimum of 65% and prioritize adequate biophysical habitat for caribou survival and recovery for Christina." ***See notes below for context on non-consensus***	• The Cold Lake sub-regional planning area contains the Cold Lake and Christina caribou, which are currently identified as belonging to separate local populations. • Management of landscape disturbance is a requirement of Alberta's provincial caribou policy and the Federal boreal caribou recovery strategy. • GoA should conduct a thorough analysis of population and land-use to assess merging Christina herd and Cold Lake herd into one range. • Consider socio-economic impact of merging herds for solutions in the Cold Lake Range, i.e. does merging the two herds reduce the solution space for the Cold Lake range. • While there has been considerable landuse/caribou disturbance modeling by the former Cold Lake working group, there is uncertainty as to the implications of expanding the solution space to a combined Cold Lake/Christina landbase. Modeling, and sectoral engagement, is required before we can assess fully options regarding the Cold lake and/or Christina caribou (i.e. to merge or not). • Consider that management strategies may need to be adjusted when modelling is done for Christina and the broader ESAR range to facilitate caribou recovery and ensure a working landscape is maintained. • An approach to manage disturbance within the sub-region exists in the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR), where disturbance is constrained to approximately 20 per cent of the weapons range. • Planners should recognize that certain oil and gas facilities, and energy infrastructure, such as large diameter pipelines require year-round operational access for maintenance and emergencies. This may result in the need for maintenance of cleared areas in caribou range. • Development of Sand gravel and borrow pits must be managed to meet caribou habitat objectives.	CMS-01, 02, 09, 12 ECON-13 **Non-consensus** *2 of 13* *(CAPP members)*

Context for Non-consensus on Recommendation No.9

- There is uncertainty and diverse views on whether Christina caribou are a separate group from Cold Lake caribou, and whether to manage habitat together or separately for Cold Lake and Christina caribou recovery
- There isn't guidance from ECCC on how to deal with the Christina sub-range in isolation from the rest of the East Side Athabasca River (ESAR) range; there are diverse views on how the minimum 65% undisturbed habitat threshold should be applied to sub-populations of ESAR, and whether a specific Christina habitat target should be adopted now or adopted later during ESAR sub-regional planning
- There are diverse views on whether habitat targets should be applied for the combined areas, or separately. Benefits of a larger planning area are: affords flexibility and more solution space for managing human footprint (e.g., forestry harvest, energy infrastructure). Concerns with applying habitat targets over combined area are: risk to the Christina herd to survive and recover, and potential 'burden' to Cold Lake resource-tenure holders of offsetting some of Christina habitat disturbance
- AEP and Christina rights holders/stakeholders should model solutions for Christina forestry aggregation and energy footprint management options, as they have for Cold Lake range
- Regardless of the management approach, achieving and maintaining a minimum 65% undisturbed habitat is the target of the Federal Recovery strategy, at the caribou range level.

10. Through the sub-region planning process, identify areas that are valuable to indigenous people for proposed conservation areas, that show long term commitments to conservation and support that practice of traditional uses

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Through collaboration with interested Indigenous communities, conservation areas in the sub-region can contribute to maintaining biodiversity and support recovering caribou populations using a variety of land management tools. Conservation areas should address both cultural significance to Indigenous communities and long-term commitments to conservation acknowledge Canada Treaties, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.	• GoA, in collaboration with First Nations and Métis groups, should pursue a process with the Government of Canada to evaluate conservation areas in CLAWR-AB, compatible with military use, reconciliation, caribou conservation, and economic potential. • The selection of management tools and management frameworks should be driven by the objectives identified by the Indigenous communities, recognizing the wide spectrum of management options for conservation areas in the province. • Pursuing establishment of conservation areas should include multi-stakeholder engagement process. • Implementation of this recommendation would need to involve: DND, tenure holders & municipalities; DND would need ensure this does not contradict the current Memorandum of Understanding held between the Provincial and Federal government. • Military use will continue in the areas of 'conservation'. • Indigenous rights are constitutionally recognized and protected, and valuable to all Canadians. This includes access to the land. ○ Need to consider access to ceremonial locations. • Sometimes people do not want sacred sites, traditional land use and occupancy listed on a map. • " Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas are lands and waters where Indigenous governments have the primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems. Culture and Language are the heart and soul of an IPCA." (ICE-report March 2018) • Recognition by the task force that there are ***overlapping*** resource tenures on most of the areas within the subregion. • Establishment of these areas would very likely require more than "engagement", they will require negotiations regarding the scope, scale and financial, implications of the proposed area(s) and management intent proposed. • Consider developing mechanism or process for engaging with Indigenous communities pursuing conservation areas as well as mechanism/land management tools to allow for alternative management options. *Note: Previous processes have resulted in tenure loss for the forestry sector.*	IND-02 CMS-13

11. Areas of the landscape must be prioritized for caribou habitat in space and time using a variety of approaches and tools such as avoidance, minimization and restoration

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Preventing disturbance (destruction or alteration) of critical habitat will conserve ecologically valuable areas for caribou and other species. • Caribou require large blocks of undisturbed mature and old growth forest habitat. These won't appear "accidentally", a conscious effort will be needed to create them. These areas need to consider biophysical value as well as the likelihood of future economic pressure for disturbance. They also need to meet the SARA test of "effective protection".	• *A Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta* states that "areas within caribou ranges will be identified and established where caribou conservation is the highest land management priority and other activities/uses minimized". • Ensure that effective measures are in place to promote avoidance of new disturbance within caribou habitat. • Ensure high best management practice standards to minimize impacts of disturbance to caribou populations in situations where avoidance is not possible. • Ensure there is continual and increasing progress towards achieving 65% undisturbed habitat within caribou ranges. • There are a lot of opportunities for habitat restoration in this sub-region. • Areas identified for caribou habitat restoration are not equivalent to permanently protected areas. • High value caribou areas should be identified and considered as part of prioritization for restoration and mitigation.	ECON-04. 04b, 07, 13, 17, 18 CMS-09, 13, 18, 20

12. Consider interior habitat outside of caribou range to support conservation of species sensitive to cumulative human land disturbance impacts

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• To address the Task Force Terms of Reference requirement for consideration of multi-species. • Cumulative human-caused land disturbance impacts (e.g. invasive species, soil compaction, temperature change, wind exposure, permafrost thaw, hydrology change) are a risk to boreal vegetation communities and wildlife that rely on more intact forest and wetland areas.	• Consider evidence-based literature on interior habitat. • Under take socio-economic impact analysis if disturbance thresholds are put in place that require offsets.	ECON-13, CMS-13

13. Revise current Oil Sands Mineral Tenure Regulations to allow energy companies to reduce their land disturbance in a manner that aligns with other energy, environment and economic policies and priorities

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Changes should support minimizing footprint through increased effectiveness and efficiency of resource development in the oil sands. • Current regulations should be revised to better reflect the current state of technology and knowledge of the oil sands resource in the Cold Lake sub-region.	• Minimum Level of Evaluation (MLE) requirements currently stipulate the number and distribution of wells to be drilled on leases. • Grouping of leases to satisfy Minimum Level of Production (MLP) and MLE would enable reduced future surface disturbance and efficient development of resources. • The Oil Sands Tenure system is not exclusive to caribou ranges, and as such, is driven by multiple considerations including the efficient and orderly development of Crown-owned oil sands resources. • If range-specific outcomes are desired, that direction should be at a more focused scale rather than built into the provincial-scale tenure system. • If there is input specific to the Oil Sands Lease Continuations policy of government, companies can compile and bring that input to Alberta Energy outside of the task force process.	ECON-04b, 13

14. Upon completion of the range plan and a functioning ILM system for attaining caribou habitat objectives, Alberta Energy should remove the moratorium on tenure sales for that range. This does not preclude Development Agreements.

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Shared responsibility to achieve steady progress towards minimum caribou habitat requirements. • Provides a shared incentive to achieve an operations-level system to manage overall disturbance; the 'reward' is unwinding tenure sales moratorium in that range. Non-consensus Recommendation *Needed to move towards consensus*: **Remove reference to functional Integrated Land Management system**. • Reference to a functioning ILM system adds another hurdle to removing the moratorium.	• Be intentional in the way the tenure sales moratorium is unwound. • This does not preclude the opportunity to amend the moratorium to allow mineral land sales in situations where no additional surface disturbance is required (e.g., drilling from existing constructed pad sites or recompletions in other zones within existing wellbores). Non-consensus Comments • Creating a functioning ILM system is a good idea, but should not be tied to the moratorium on tenure which was introduced as a temporary measure to allow time to complete the range plans. • More information is required on the sequencing of when an ILM system is developed. Is it necessary to have this in place before tenure is sold or is it a process that would occur after tenure is obtained. • Since 2016, 23 per cent of Alberta has been under a mineral tenure moratorium. Previous indication to industry was that the moratorium on tenure sales in caribou ranges would be lifted once a range plan was approved. Continuing the moratorium beyond the approval of the range plan does not send a positive signal to investors that Alberta is open for business.	**Non-Consensus** *3 of 12 2 CAPP; 1 RMA*

15. Conduct a cross-sectoral value assessment of monitoring programs (both those under regulatory requirement, and voluntary) to develop a coordinated approach to mitigation and monitoring in areas of highest caribou use

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Currently the same level of mitigation and monitoring is conducted throughout caribou ranges, regardless of caribou presence and/or use.	• Redirecting resources to focus on high value caribou areas may require modifications to currently authorized Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plans required under Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act Approvals. • Consider provincial Oil Sands Monitoring program in the assessment.	CMS-18

16. Consolidate forest harvesting in the Cold Lake and Christina caribou ranges, through an aggregated harvest approach that takes into consideration the fibre inputs of forest industry facilities, harvest location and rate of harvest. The objectives of the approach are to maintain harvesting opportunity, to reduce fragmentation and to support the creation of larger future habitat patches while retaining practices to maintain in-stand biodiversity.

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Planning and implementing an aggregated harvest approach will reduce access requirements, reduce edge effect, and create large tracts of undisturbed habitat over time.	• Ensure all timber quota holders are engaged and understand proposed changes to harvest areas and sequence. ○ The timber supply, and wood quality/piece size, implications of aggregated harvest are as yet unknown and will require a full timber supply analysis to be undertaken • Look for opportunities for shared access with other industries (timing and location of access). • Plan forest harvest sequence (spatial and temporal) to align with caribou requirements by considering caribou distribution, habitat connectivity, stand age and existing disturbance, while also providing ongoing access to forest resource that accounts for the input requirements of mills (volume and timber profile). • Recognize that aggregated harvest may have significant impacts to trappers and Indigenous communities and these would need to be addressed through significant Crown-led consultation. • Prioritize near-term (first ~3 decades) harvest in areas that overlap with existing or planned footprint, and outside of high-use caribou areas. • To the greatest extent possible, respect the first 10 years of the current Spatial Harvest Sequence. This would allow aligning sub-regional plan implications for forest managmenet (timber harvesting specifically) with the submission of the next Forest Management Plan in 2025. • An aggregated harvest approach is a tool, but not a perfect tool. The effectiveness of the approach depends on the amount of overlap of the FMU(s) and the caribou ranges(s), and the age class distribution of the forest.	ECON-04, 13, 17, 18 CMS-09, 20

17. Implement cost-effective caribou habitat restoration of legacy features in priority areas over the next 10 years to demonstrate annual measurable increases in the amount of undisturbed habitat, recognizing the shared responsibility for these features and historical contributions

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The modeling work of the Cold Lake Range Planning Multi-stakeholder Working Group indicates that through restoration of legacy features, significant progress towards 65% undisturbed habitat can be achieved. • Restoration will reduce the length of time for vegetation to achieve the biophysical attributes required for caribou, reduce the duration that features act as valuable movement corridors for predators, increase habitat connectivity, and increase the amount of undisturbed habitat over time. • Given the limitations (e.g., capacity, cost) in the amount of restoration that can occur annually in caribou range, future restoration treatment should prioritize areas that will have the most benefit for caribou recovery. • Coordinating among sectors will support cost effective restoration.	• Formal recognition in the sub-regional plan of the tremendous amount of restoration that has taken place in the Cold Lake Caribou Range and Christina Herd since 2012. • Focus on areas that minimize land use conflict with industry. Non-tenured lands could be candidate areas to reduce potential conflict. • Utilize restoration prioritization tools developed by Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance. • Indigenous and recreation land users are engaged early in restoration planning. • Support capacity development for Indigenous communities and businesses to allow them to effectively compete for habitat restoration contracts • Areas within caribou ranges (Cold Lake and East Side Athabasca River) are prioritized for restoration efforts, especially areas that are high value biophysical caribou habitat, important for habitat connectivity, or show slow natural regeneration rates. • Restoration work adheres to high standards that replicate natural biophysical characteristics, to the extent possible. • There is continual and increasing progress towards achieving 65% undisturbed habitat within caribou ranges. • Commit to a timeline when restoration benefits will be fully realized. • Consider opportunities for collective restoration efforts and collaboration with Indigenous stakeholders. • Take advantage of planned forestry access (and removal of access) when scheduling line restoration. • Caribou recovery measures within currently approved oil sands project boundaries is treated differently than in areas that are outside existing productive footprint.	ECON-13, 18 CMS-09, 13,18, 20

18. For federally regulated energy projects, Alberta will work with Canada to align federal habitat mitigation and monitoring requirements with Alberta's caribou restoration priorities and range plan direction

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*

• Alberta is not currently pursuing an offset program to fund caribou habitat restoration as other mechanisms that may be more efficient are being assessed.	• Caribou restoration requirements for new transmission pipeline construction should consider the following strategies:
	  ○ Applying access control measures across entire multi-use corridors, and
	  ○ Restoration of existing infrastructure to an operational size (e.g., restoration of existing footprint that may be a 30 m wide right-of-way to a 10 m wide right-of-way).
		CMS-13

	• To answer questions around habitat restoration efficacy, monitoring is required over very long time periods with a statistically robust sample size. Thus, this monitoring is not at an appropriate scale when applied at a Project scale and is very costly to complete.	

19. In support of the current and future economic value of the oil and gas industry, implement improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory processes to enhance competitiveness of oil sands while maintaining the social and environmental objectives of the Cold Lake Sub-Region

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory process will help to ensure that process and timelines for regulatory decisions are predictable and efficient and that limited resources are being efficiently spent to maximize the environment, social and economic benefits provided to the sub-region.	• Modernizing the Master Schedule of Standards and Conditions (MSSC), expedited approval decisions, AER and ACO harmonization, and streamlined regulatory process for approved projects.	ECON-04b, 07

20. A stable, long term and shared funding mechanism must be established to restore legacy footprint in the sub-region

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The rate of restoration will drive the amount of habitat available in the future. Increasing caribou habitat ensures both the sustainability of populations and industry. Without this mechanism, the range plan will be hollow and unlikely to achieve the 65 per cent undisturbed habitat target in the future. This is a critical problem which requires leadership to solve.	• Need to recognize that restoration of legacy features is a shared responsibility (energy industry, provincial government, and federal government).	ECON-04, 04b, 07, 13, 17, 18 CMS-09,13, 18, 20

21. Implement incentives for accelerated abandonment and reclamation (A&R) of existing Petroleum & Natural Gas (PNG) Wells and associated infrastructure in priority restoration areas

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Incentivizing A&R of PNG wells brings forward restoration in time and allows opportunity for larger contiguous blocks of restored habitat in caribou ranges.	• Explore potential incentives including royalty credits, escalating rental credits, greenhouse gas offsets, in order to accelerate PNG abandonment and reclamation in caribou areas.	ECON-13, 18 CMS-13

22. Explore evidence-based revisions to reclamation practices and criteria to expedite the return of disturbed habitat to restored habitat in caribou ranges.

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*

• Current reclamation guidelines for peatland and forest criteria were not developed in consideration of caribou requirements.	• Explore using a cross-functional committee to update current reclamation standards to be inclusive of restoring caribou habitat.	CMS-09, 13 ECON-13, 18

23. Change ground disturbance regulations to allow restoration activities on abandoned gas lines that will result in increased candidate areas for restoration

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Current ground disturbance regulations prevent restoration of these types of footprint.	• Leverage industry efforts to use a risk management approach to address operational risk of working in proximity to abandoned lines.	ECON-18

24. In high-value caribou areas, voluntary mitigation should be encouraged within oil sands project areas such as accelerated reclamation, alternative access routes and voluntary avoidance of currently undisturbed habitat

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Voluntary mitigation measures at a local scale within the Cold Lake Caribou Range and Christina sub-herd provide additional value and should be encouraged, particularly in high value caribou areas. Often times these value add mitigation measures are difficult to model spatially and/or do not demonstrate significant progress towards 65% undisturbed habitat due to the level of current disturbance in the local areas (i.e. inside active oil sands project lease boundaries).	• Aggregated monitoring information (e.g., Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute, GoA, Regional Industry Caribou Collaboration) is used to identify high value caribou areas. • GoA could organize examination of all available information and be spatially explicit. • Company initiated bilateral discussions with AEP and AER would be the mechanism to implement voluntary initiatives. • Voluntary mitigation work does not preclude mandatory requirements within range plans.	ECON-13, 18 CMS-13, 20

25. Encourage ongoing research and innovation into technologies that facilitate reduction in new surface disturbance

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Research and innovation supports increased land use efficiency.	• Leverage existing funds and partnerships through academic and industry associations, such as Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance, and the Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada.	

Comments for Recommendations 26 to 33:

- The Caribou population and Multi-species working group discussed the issue of black bear predation on caribou. The degree to which black bear predation on caribou occurs is uncertain. Recent preliminary research in the Christina caribou range found no black bear predation on neonates. Research on black bear habits during the calving season are continuing. Research elsewhere in Canada has documented the presence of "specialist" bears that will focus on caribou. Given that black bear numbers greatly exceed (i.e., potentially threefold) caribou in northeast Alberta, it is reasonable to assume that predation by black bears on caribou is not common. For example, if each black bear killed one caribou per year, it would not be numerically possible to have any caribou remaining in either the Cold Lake or Christina ranges. Assuming therefore that the majority of black bear predation on caribou occurs from specialist bears, the working group was challenged with what management options were available to recommend. Identifying specialist bears in northeast Alberta is a nearly impossible task. A broad-scale bear reduction program would unnecessarily target bears not contributing to caribou population declines, and without sufficient evidence, would likely not garner social acceptance. Such a program could in fact reduce any social acceptance for Alberta Environment and Park's ongoing wolf management program.
- For all wildlife management actions strategies below (deer, beaver, moose, wolf), consider Indigenous hunting, fishing and guiding opportunities as well as local tourism opportunities that could benefit or be created in association with this work in the Cold Lake region (e.g. lodging and amenities).
- A conscious effort should be made to share data on strategies used in recovery efforts nationally. This would benefit understandings and improve evaluation of strategies

26. Develop a management strategy to significantly reduce white-tailed deer abundance and distribution (including current range expansions) within the Cold Lake sub-region

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• White-tailed deer contribute greatly to the abundance of wolf populations and are a primary prey source. Furthermore, white-tailed deer are carriers of chronic wasting disease (CWD) which has been detected approximately 30 km away from the southern edge of the Cold Lake caribou range. The presence of CWD into caribou range could be a significant additional stressor on caribou populations.	• Complete a comprehensive assessment to evaluate various approaches to reduce white-tailed deer abundance and distribution. • Testing for CWD should be mandatory in the Cold Lake Sub-region. • Food security is of great concern to indigenous communities and as such, meat from harvested white-tailed deer could be a significant source of meat for band members. • Consider strategic access management to facilitate hunter access to deer habitat. • A special deer management area south of the CLAWR, at the leading edge of CWD occurrence, should be created to attempt to reduce white-tailed deer density and stem the movement of CWD into caribou ranges. • Effective harvest management will require coordination with recreational user groups to effectively provide access into this area. • White-tailed deer harvest should prioritize the harvest of adult females (does) as they are the key drivers of population increase. • Consider increasing education on CWD.	CMS-02, 20 IND-02, 01 REC-02, 01

27. The current wolf management program within the Cold Lake sub-region should continue. At the conclusion of the fifth year of this program (i.e., following the 2020-21 winter), a comprehensive program review should be completed to determine if the program should continue.

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The current wolf management program, entering its fourth year, has stemmed the decline of both the Cold Lake and ESAR caribou populations. The benefits of this program are tangible in terms of calf recruitment and population growth rates. However, recognizing that a wolf removal program with no clear end will lack social acceptance, a program review with clear criteria for determining if the program continues is critical.	• Program review should include specific and transparent criteria under which the wolf management program would continue or be concluded. • Include assessing primary prey species density: deer and moose. • Wolf management should continue to engage local trappers in wolf removal activities. Continued wolf removal programs should only proceed if aggressive habitat-based measures for caribou recovery are also implemented.	CMS-02, 20

28. Develop an economically viable, spatially-defined incentivized beaver trapping program to reduce beaver abundance in core areas of caribou ranges (i.e., high caribou use)

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Local information suggests that beaver abundance in the Cold Lake sub-region is increasing. Research from northeast Alberta has documented the high proportion of beaver in wolf diets. Wolves are drawn in to caribou habitat during the non-frozen period in search of beavers at which time caribou are incidentally preyed upon. Mortality of adult female caribou and calves peaks in the spring and early summer. As beaver numbers increase, wolves increasingly enter high-use caribou habitat while hunting, thus increasing predation rates on caribou.	• A broad-scale trapping initiative across the entire sub-region is not necessary. • Alberta Environment and Parks should identify core areas of high caribou occurrence. It is in these areas that intensive beaver trapping should occur and thus the program should be relatively refined in space. This may include areas within the CLAWR. • Trappers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, must be engaged in this program. • Current prices for beaver pelts do not make beaver trapping an economically viable opportunity. This program should identify approaches to incentivize uptake on beaver trapping. • Utilizing the maximum amount of the carcass (i.e., value-added processing) may increase support from Indigenous groups. • The program would also benefit from the development of indicators of beaver abundance that can be used to monitor beavers in the sub-region including those areas where trapping is deemed most critical. • Any trapping for beaver control activities within caribou habitat will require timing considerations and specific strategy. • Strategies will need to address known complications with green & white area and access challenges. • Effects of borrow pits and Sand & Gravel disturbances if reclaimed to new or enlarged water features which may stimulate beaver populations, and have negative impacts to caribou populations.	CMS-02, 18, 20 IND-02, 01

29. Develop a moose harvest strategy that addresses caribou conservation goals, the right of Indigenous peoples, and interests of stakeholders

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Alberta Environment and Parks is currently entering its fourth year of intensive wolf management activities to reduce wolf abundance within the Cold Lake and Christina caribou ranges. Moose abundances may have increased due to reduced predator numbers. A strategy to reduce moose numbers to those prior to wolf management actions will mitigate the potential for rapid increases in wolf number, when wolf removals cease, due to higher prey abundance in the sub-region. This strategy would thus "remove" the benefit, in terms of moose numbers, realized by intensive wolf management. • In addition to the relevance of moose abundance to caribou conservation, as an additional prey source for wolves, moose are also a socially valued game species by Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters. This recommendation would aim to provide for high moose productivity in areas nearer to communities, while reducing moose density/productivity in areas farther from communities.	• Alberta Environment and Parks should conduct a moose survey within the sub-region to compare current moose abundance to that prior to wolf management actions. A moose survey was completed within the CLAWR in 2014 when wolf management was initially implemented. • Further assessment of moose in the sub-region may be useful to inform the strategy over time, however there is currently enough information to start implementation. • Any moose harvest strategy must include Indigenous consultation and engagement with non-Indigenous hunters. • Support may be necessary to allow for meaningful participation from Indigenous communities. • A moose management cooperative should be considered that includes all moose management stakeholders, adopts a moose management zonation approach, a reduction in moose densities far from communities and in caribou ranges, and a bull-focussed strategy near communities (i.e., to protect cow moose and bolster population productivity).	CMS-02, 20 IND-02, 01 REC-01, 02

30. Develop sub-regionally appropriate terrestrial and aquatic indicators to monitor biodiversity

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Biodiversity components, in addition to caribou, are valued in the Cold Lake sub-region. Work has already been initiated through the Biodiversity Management Framework (BMF), arising from LARP, and from monitoring initiatives and inventories conducted by ABMI, Oil Sands Monitoring (OSM) program, and AEP. Effective monitoring of key indicators will support and allow biodiversity values to be considered in management decisions in the Cold Lake sub-region.	• Identification, assessment, and monitoring of biodiversity values should be guided by the BMF as outlined in the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (2012). • Also consider work that ABMI and OSM have completed and continues to do. • Explore the use of sub-regional specific biodiversity indicators. • Different approaches to evaluating biodiversity values should be applied in the green zone and white zone. • Linked to **Recom06** on a multi-species/(EBM) Approach • Linked to **Recom12** on interior habitat outside of caribou range	CMS-01

31. Assess the suitability of a predator exclosure fence for the Cold Lake and Christina caribou range based on the success of the Little Smoky pilot rearing facility

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The proximate cause of caribou decline is unsustainable wolf predation, primarily on calves. This heightened predation is the cumulative result of elevated predator populations, increased spatial overlap of predators with caribou, and enhanced movement of those predators in a fragmented landscape. In the medium to longer term, habitat restoration will potentially reduce the spatial overlap with – and slow the movement of – predators at the landscape scale. In the short-term, population management is necessary to buoy calf survival and recruitment until habitat restoration effects are realized. • The intent is to create a predator-free fenced area (exclosure) to support a small breeding group of caribou within their natural habitat in the Cold Lake sub-region, and to translocate caribou born within the exclosure to reinforce extant local populations	• Considerable work has been done to advance this concept, and COSIA has undertaken both preliminary and detailed scoping for a 100-km^2 predator exclosure fence in Northeast Alberta. Over 6 years, industry collaboratively advanced the concept to where there was broad understanding of the potential benefits of this tool, as well as strong support for implementation from academia, industry and local Indigenous communities. • Given the high cost associated with operational costs of caribou pens, deployment of this tool should be tactical in caribou ranges where the need is highest and implementation will show the most gains in recovering caribou population • Cost-sharing and governance structures must be developed. • This project is recommended here as a 10-year Pilot, with associated research, monitoring and adaptive management elements. • Commitment to an exclosure does not replace or supersede the implementation of habitat recovery measures, however we must recognize that there will be a lag time for habitat recovery, and calf survival must be managed (i.e., increased) during this period. *This recommendation should not be considered as endorsement for the pilot rearing facility (nor previous maternity pens) in the Little Smoky, as not all Task Force members support these forms of intensive population management.*	CMS-02, 18, 20 IND-02

32. Undertake comprehensive engagement with Indigenous communities pertaining to wildlife management issues

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The GoA has a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal and Treaty rights are not negatively impacted by its actions. Involving Indigenous people and incorporating Indigenous perspectives into land use and wildlife management processes will increase understanding of potential adverse impacts of anticipated Crown decisions and reduce Alberta's risk of infringing on or negatively impacting Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and traditional uses. • Improved relationships and enhanced knowledge of Indigenous interests in the landscape will also improve planning processes in the early stages and reduce the emergence of opposition during legislatively required consultation. • Many of the management recommendations either trigger the Crown's duty to consult or rely directly on Indigenous communities taking actions as partners.	• Indigenous knowledge (IK) should be considered in all aspects of planning. • Equivalency of IK and science as valuable/viable sources of information to reference • IK value of recreational & contemporary land use; multi- purpose access. Meaningful engagement includes knowledge. • Indigenous knowledge should be respected and valued. For example, different industries use different calculations to determine what is undisturbed. People who hunt know animal behaviours. The number of undisturbed habitat does not necessarily reflect animal behaviour. • Support Indigenous-led land management activities such as guardianship and monitoring programs. • The Indigenous Consultation Capacity Program (ICCP) should be maintained at current or bolstered funding levels to allow for effective and meaningful engagement with Indigenous	IND-01, 02

	communities. High levels of trust will be required on the part of First Nations, Metis, and GoA.	

33. Develop an access plan with DND for wildlife management required within the CLAWR to meet the caribou recovery targets

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• A number of the recommendations provided by the Population Working Group to address caribou conservation and recovery involve the harvest and management of other species. The CLAWR represents a substantial portion of the Cold Lake caribou range and thus actions occurring within it are critical to the conservation and recovery of the Cold Lake caribou population. Currently, non-Indigenous harvest is prohibited within the CLAWR, and rules surrounding when and where Indigenous harvest may occur is unclear.	• A wildlife harvest access plan should consider Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters. • Recognize that not all areas of the CLAWR may be accessible due to DND's operational requirements, the safety of hunters, and the safety of industrial operators. • Other DND managed areas do permit harvest of wildlife by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous hunters (e.g., CFB Suffield, CFB Wainwright). • Awareness that opportunities are not the same in CLAWR due to significant differences in operations on the base.	CMS-01, 20; REC-01,02; IND-01, 02

34. Conduct a strategic review of tourism and associated infrastructure in the sub-region, and develop action plans to support regionally enjoyed activities and a vibrant tourism sector in the future

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• While the Cold Lake area is rich in natural resources and local services, there is a lack of quality infrastructure especially in areas in close proximity to lakeshore areas that support tourism and recreation-based activities, including government run campgrounds and private sector enterprises. There is also a severe gap in transportation infrastructure to bring people to the Cold Lake region and move them around the area.	• Promote a smaller tourism "hub" zone that encompasses the Lakeland areas within about 45-minute drive of the marina in Cold Lake as a pilot to increase tourism opportunities within the Cold Lake Sub-Region. • Create a sub-committee/working group mandated to be a tourism incubator while stewarding regional values and objectives. • Increased support for regional tourism marketing infrastructure. • Develop mechanisms to increase support for local tourism events, festivals & activities. • Consider past studies on Recreation and tourism: e.g. Lakeland Country Destination and Tourism Opportunity Plan; municipal studies, etc. • Focus higher impact lake-based recreation infrastructure on a limited number of front country sites; manage mid-country and backcountry lake recreation access to maintain and restore biodiversity in the lakes and their shoreline buffer areas for conservation and indigenous traditional land use priorities. • Create mechanisms to support ecotourism developments & the long-term stewardship of ecotourism resources. Define Eco tourism activities and address barriers to private enterprises who may wish to pursue them. • Assess application and approval processes to support municipal and commercial leasing of crown land for recreational/tourism ventures and opportunities where suitable and aligned with management intent.	REC-01, 02, 21 IND-02, ECON-13, 17 CMS-01, 13

	• Establish planning protocol that involves responsibility of both Alberta Environment and Economic Development and Tourism to collaborate on recreation and tourism planning - to support the outcomes, respective responsibilities and mandates of both departments. • Consider tourism and recreation planning opportunities outside of caribou ranges in reclamation planning of abandonment and reclamation (A&R) of existing Petroleum & Natural Gas (PNG) Wells and associated infrastructure.	

35. Prioritize development of a sub-regional trail system by 2022, to provide a managed, meaningful, and sustainable trail system for the region - reflecting and supporting the activities of those enjoyed in the region and as destination for those outside of it

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan identified the recreational interests and desires of those in the region, and the social-economic benefit of motorized and non-motorized trail based activities. Creating a meaningful designated trail network, provides recreational access and enjoyment users seek on designated trails vs unmanaged recreation off trail. Summer Motorized Recreation represented the second highest recreational activity in the region, with camping first. Snowmobiling was the number one winter activity for the region. (ref: Regional Recreation Demand and Satisfaction Survey for the Lower Athabasca Region -March 2013)	• Outside caribou ranges, a designated trails network for indigenous, trapper, recreation-tourism and industrial access should contribute to meeting evidence-based habitat targets for disturbance-sensitive species of indigenous and conservation concern. (Alberta's Livingston-Porcupine trail network allocated portions of linear disturbance between distinct user groups: industrial 'restricted access' and recreation 'public access'. For Cold Lake sub-region, Indigenous and trapper access need to be considered in this framework. • In caribou ranges, integrate indigenous, trapper, industrial, and recreation-tourism access and infrastructure to ensure adequate biophysical habitat to achieve and maintain at least minimum 65% undisturbed habitat threshold for naturally self-supporting caribou. (Required for effective critical habitat protection for a SARA-compliant range plan) • Outside of Caribou ranges, incorporate the strategies already identified within the LARP to provide meaningful and managed recreational trail opportunities for the region. • Planning to support the recreational values and activities enjoyed within the sub-region, to provide sustainability, management and meaningful recreational opportunity. Camping(38.5%), OHV Use(30.2%), Fishing(29.3%) and Hiking (22.5%) are the top four recreational activities within this region.(ref: Regional Recreation Demand and Satisfaction Survey for the Lower Athabasca Region -March 2013) • AB Culture and Tourism's 2017 Albertan Recreation Survey found: Top 5 land-based activities in terms of % of Albertan households participating in past year, are: Day Hiking (53%), Overnight Camping (41%), City Picnicking (33%), Country Picnicking (32%), and Off-road Vehicles (15%). Top 3 snow-based activities are: Snowshoeing (10%), Cross-country Skiing (10%) and Snowmobiling (6%). The most favourite activities among Albertans are Walking (23%), Camping (17%) and Hiking (14%). • Link to **Recom01** on access management • Link to **Recom30** for suitable sub-regional indicator	REC-01, 02, 21 ECON-13,17, CMS-01,13

36. Increase education, monitoring and enforcement on public lands for both disposition holders and land users to ensure compliance

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Respect of the laws and legal requirements of requisite acts such as the *Public Lands Act* and the *Land Stewardship Act* are essential to support appropriate land use whether for recreation or tourism. • Will serve to create the balance in proper use of the land.	• GoA staff should be responsible to set standards, supervise and inspect all public lands recreation trail work, whether new or for maintenance, with written, publicly available reports. • Trail development utilizes the (guidelines that were released). • Recreation and trails are not disposition holders (public lands). • Trail design standard completed last year by government (draft last fall). Both standards and enforcement applied for that type of activity. Should be standards and oversight, inspection, transparent.	REC-01, 21, ECON 17, CMS-13

37. Develop the regulatory and legislative framework that supports a designated trail network within the sub-region.

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• A regional trail system that supports various forms of nature-based tourism and forms of outdoor recreation that spans a broader area within the Sub-region that is designated for such use and does not conflict with other land use designations. The network will assist to attract more events and visitors to the region. Requires support from government and non-government organizations to be successfully managed. • OHV Recreation is highly valued within the region (for both recreation and access to other forms of recreational activities). Ongoing education, enforcement, maintenance, support and stewardship is required to ensure sustainability.	• Collaborate with representative provincial and local organizations to develop and deliver solutions on stewardship and implementation. • Regulatory and legislative framework should be developed with consideration of how it will interact with the Land Use Framework and existing legislation on issues related to the environment, public lands management, recreation areas, habitat protection, and other relevant issues. It should be made clear which provisions will supersede or be subservient to other existing Regulations and Acts. • Public Land Use Zones should be considered in some areas, as they offer regulatory tools for trail planning and designation while supporting recreational, wildlife and environmental values. • The regulatory and legislative framework should recognize there is an optimal trail quantity and density that can meet recreational and environmental objectives, and that not all trail users are compatible on the same trail.	REC-01, 02, 21, ECON-17 IND-02, CMS-18

38. Provide opportunities for local Indigenous groups to work directly with GoA departments on the delivery of cultural programming

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• The culture and history of Indigenous and Treaty people in the region is rich, but not well known. An important element of the collective social and economic fabric in the Cold Lake region is based on increasing the understanding of Indigenous culture, history, and rights. It is vitally important this Indigenous perspective is told in the region's history to	• *None*	IND-13

promote Indigenous tourism and to work towards reconciliation efforts with the non-Indigenous community.		

39. No new grazing dispositions (permits, licenses, leases) on lands within caribou ranges. Grazing may be permitted outside caribou ranges, depending on suitability and compatibility with other uses

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Sustainable forest management is a key priority for landuse in the Green area. Energy sector tenure is also a priority landuse in the Green area. As cumulative effects is an issue in this region we should not be further exacerbating it by allowing agricultural expansion into the Green area (particularly where a Forest Management exists). • Grazing at levels found in fenced grazing operations (as opposed to native boreal grazers such as wood bison) changes plant species composition and vertical/horizontal structure. These changes in the plant community in turn have negative implications for bird diversity and abundance (and likely other aspects of biodiversity as well). In addition, cattle often concentrate near water bodies causing soil compaction, rutting, changes in plant species composition and degradation of water quality (from changes to overland flow, as well as deposition of feces/urine). • Grazing potential in the Green area is low; particularly in the central mixed wood and the effects of cattle grazing on forestry are well documented. From a forestry perspective soil compaction from cattle can impede tree growth potential (and in extreme cases can cause tree mortality). Following timber harvest cattle will feed on young growing shoots of deciduous trees for the first several years' post-harvest. Silvicultural and tree growth and yield can thus be negatively affected.	• New applicants for grazing dispositions on crown lands should conduct and provide analyses that demonstrates they can minimize or mitigate negative impacts on biodiversity conservation (particularly species at risk and migratory birds). If the grazing disposition is granted, the applicant must commit to long-term monitoring of selected biodiversity, water quality and riparian health. • If the application for new grazing dispositions overlap a Forest Management Agreement area the applicant must demonstrate that grazing will not impede current or future forest growth (e.g., post-harvest regeneration). • If the grazing disposition is granted within an FMA, the applicant must also commit to long-term monitoring of forest growth/regeneration indicators.	CMS-01, 02, 09, 12 ECON-13

40. The Task Force recommends the continuation of the existing Peat Policy

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• Peatlands encompass the vast majority of caribou biophysical habitat in northeastern Alberta. The Draft Provincial Woodland Caribou Plan states *"Peat operations are considered incompatible with management goals for lands that are subject to defined management frameworks or plans (e.g. caribou ranges) that are being specifically managed to support recovery of species at risk."*	• Current policy on moratorium on disposition of all future peat areas within caribou range. • Consider that 'best caribou habitat' is often also the 'best peat' areas and therefore in direct conflict with one another. • In areas where peat exists outside of caribou ranges, leases could continue.	CMS-01, 02, 09, 12

41. Across the sub-region, support ecologically healthy river corridors and good water quality by enhancing avoidance/mitigation practices

Rationale	*Considerations*	*Outcomes*
• River corridor integrity is key to life cycles and habitat connectivity of many terrestrial and aquatic species. • Water course connectivity is crucial to aquatic ecosystems. • Water quality is vital to human and aquatic ecosystem health. The capacity of aquatic systems to buffer nutrients and other water quality stressors is limited. • LARP's current surface water quality management framework applies only to the Lower Athabasca River.	• Use evidence-based riparian setbacks and avoid water crossings where possible. • Where crossings occur, use best practices for appropriate crossing structures and other mitigation. • Restore stream flow in areas with hanging culverts to facilitate fish movement. • Support restoration of degraded river corridors . • Maintain the high water quality of the Sand River, the Beaver River's major tributary in the sub-region. • Develop a surface water quality management framework for the Beaver River with rights holders and stakeholders. Meanwhile, encourage completion of Beaver River watershed and Athabasca River watershed integrated watershed management plans, lake watershed management plans, and adoption of best management practices for water quality. • Review and address any evidence-based water quality issues related to Crown agricultural leases. • Follow the master schedule of standards and conditions/operating ground rules in relation to riparian areas and other best practices for working near waterbodies. • Review of existing related planning documents.	

APPENDIX A – Priority Outcomes

No.	Code	Statement
1	REC-01	Our recreation pursuits are inclusive, sustainable, safe, and responsible, for present and future generations
2	IND-01	Indigenous traditional land uses are supported, and Indigenous knowledge is respected and valued
3	ECON-04	There is certainty of access to resources
4	ECON-13	Resources are developed in an environmentally responsible manner that is recognized nationally and internationally
5	ECON-17	Access is managed between all users (e.g. recreation, industry, Indigenous rights holders)
6	CMS-13	Habitat is managed to support conservation and recovery of other species, in addition to caribou
7	IND-02	Indigenous people are respectfully and meaningfully engaged in land and wildlife management
8	IND-13	Sustainable economic opportunities are available to Indigenous people
9	ECON-07	Process and timelines for regulatory decisions are predictable, effective and efficient
10	CMS-02	Caribou attain a self-sustaining status that could support a sustainable harvest
11	REC-21	Ecological impacts from recreation activities on the landscape are mitigated by implementing appropriate zonation and mitigation tools (e.g. stream crossings)
12	CMS-01	Biodiversity is restored and/or maintained to support both recovery of caribou to naturally self-sustaining populations and multi-species conservation
13	CMS-18	There are areas where caribou conservation is identified as the highest land management priority
14	ECON-04b	There is investor confidence
15	ECON-18	Forests are managed to support societal, economic and environmental needs, including naturally self-sustaining caribou populations
16	REC-02	Recreation opportunities that are inclusive and represent Albertan's diverse interests are available
17	CMS-09	There is sufficient biophysical caribou habitat available to support caribou recovery
18	CMS-20	Alternate prey and predators and their habitat are managed to support caribou

APPENDIX B – Consensus Model

The Task Force employed a six level consensus model to facilitate their discussions for their decision making process.

In this approach, members are not simply for or against a decision, but have the option to situate themselves on a scale that lets them express their individual option more clearly.

1. Full support
2. Acceptable
3. Support with reservations
4. I am not thrilled with it, but I can live with it and will not block it
5. Need more information or more discussion (non-consensus)
6. Cannot support it and cannot accept it (non-consensus)

If all members are at level #4 or above (3, 2 or 1), then by definition, consensus has been reached. If someone is at level, 2, 3 or 4, they have the *option of explaining* their reservations, and the group can address these, if they wish. While not necessary, as consensus is already achieved, this additional information usually improves the recommendation.

If a members is at level 5, they have the *obligation to explain* what information or discussion they require from the group. If a member is at level 6, they have the *obligation to offer a solution* that can accommodate their needs and the needs of the rest of the group.

This models faciliates defining key issues underlying non-consensus and aids in focusing the discussion and in finding solutions. Where consensus was not possible in the Task Force's decisions on recommendations, the dissenting organization and rationale for the non-consensus are provided.

APPENDIX C – 2017 Draft Woodland Caribou Range Plan Review

Task Force review of management approaches covered in Sections 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the 2017 Draft Provincial Caribou Range Plan.

The following assessment is based on application of management approaches for the Cold Lake Sub-regional Planning work, where ✓ = applicable; ○ = requires further considerations; ✖ = not applicable. An asterisk indicates when advice on the management approach is included in the Task Force recommendations. More detailed notes on each section have been provided to GoA Planners.

Section		Draft Range Plan Strategies	Assessment
3.2	Caribou Habitat Restoration Approaches	**General** (refer to s.3.2.1 – pg.30) Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) will lead a provincial restoration program which will be guided by a committee made up of cross-ministry, industry, stakeholder, indigenous and a third-party restoration agent. The Draft Range plan provides direction on several specific types of restoration:	✓*
		Seismic Lines (refer to s.3.2.2 –3.2.3 – pg. 31-33) Due to the high prevalence of seismic lines in the Alberta landscape, re-establishing tree cover on seismic lines increases the amount of intact habitat more than any other management tool. This sections provides guidance on the restoration of seismic lines	✓*
		Geophysical Exploration (refer to s.3.2.4 – pg. 35) Improvements in geophysical exploration methods over the past decades have aided in minimizing disturbance. This sections outline new guidelines (updating historic methods). These guidelines aim to minimized footprint in Geophysical exploration work to avoid the need for subsequent restoration activities.	✖
		Pipelines (refer to s.3.2.5 – pg. 36) This section outlines new guidelines to minimize surface footprint associated with belowground pipelines. It provides strategies to retaining and revegetate active pipeline corridors, while accommodating the ability for maintenance and inspections.	✓*
3.3	Management of Access	**Regional Access Management Plans** (refer to s.3.3.1 – pg. 41) This strategy looks at coordinating access among land users at a Regional level to address the unintentional land fragmentation in Alberta resulting from project-specific access planning of the past. The concept is to design an approach to maintaining access to land and resources while minimizing land disturbance through using tools such as shared-access lines. Access management plans will benefit from coordinating timelines for between projects (see #3 – Appended Development below). These plans are dynamic and need to be continually updated to achieve the desired outcome.	✓*

		Appended Development (refer to s.3.3.3 – pg. 44) Appended development refers to the concept of placing oil and gas production features (i.e. 'developments') in close proximity to each other. This approach is a key to maximizing the benefits of a regional access management plan and greatly reduces footprint while maintaining economic activities. The strategy aims to place the majority of development within 200m of an optimized road network.	○
3.4		**Zonation** (refer to s3.4 - pg 48) The ministries of Energy, and Agriculture and Forestry support a zone approach to harmonize multi-sector development. While still in a conceptual phase, zones and land use provisions would be established based on the identification of core critical habitat priority zones, which attempts to achieve a staged approach to development within caribou ranges in support of caribou habitat restoration.	○
3.4	**Energy Activity (refer to s.3.4 – pg. 48)**	To support the management of future disturbance, the existing new tenure restriction will remain in place until an analysis of each range-specific plan will provide more details on potential paths to the resumption of sales.	✓*
		Oil and gas development will minimize landscape fragmentation within caribou ranges over space and time in alignment with range-specific rulesets	✓*
		Companies with multiple lease holdings inside caribou ranges will be required to prioritize development where multi-sector development is planned (described below). One developed and active operations cease, reclamation activities must be initiated prior to development of remaining leases.	✖*
		Operators will utilize multi-well pads and directional drilling within caribou ranges. Where this is not feasible, applications will be required to show rationale. The total pad size must be identified up front within the application process.sub-detail	✓*
		Where *feasible and applicable*, oil and gas wells should be remotely operated and well sites should have sufficient resources (e.g. methanol, tanks) on site to minimize the number of site visits.	○
3.5	**Forestry Activity**	Future forest harvesting will focus on localizing forestry activities to minimize the overall extent of forestry-related disturbance, and help to create larger patches of intact habitat as the forest regrows. Aggregating harvest areas reduces the amount of access required, reducing total disturbed habitat – with potential economic benefits of reduced construction and maintenance costs.	✓*
		Harvest location will avoid areas of high caribou occupancy during the first 10 year period	✓*

		The extent and rate of harvesting over time will be assessed to ensure there are no significant negative implications for caribou biophysical habitat.	✓*
		Within caribou ranges Forestry companies are encouraged to reforest legacy linear footprint within new harvest blocks and within 500 metres adjacent to harvest blocks. This will result in larger, undisturbed areas.	○
		The areas available for harvesting will be limited to predetermined harvest areas for any given decade. If an area is not harvested within the decade identified it will continue to be available the following decade will apply:	✓
3.6	**Coal, Metallic and Industrial Minerals Activity**	Existing coal, metallic and industrial minerals tenure will be honoured and adhere to approval processes and requirements in place at the time of surface approvals.	✓
		Future coal, metallic and industrial minerals tenure will have a no surface access restriction beyond 200 metres of an optimized approved road network, as determined by the Long-term Road Access Plan.	✓
3.7	**Sand & Gravel**	Existing sand and gravel agreements will be honoured, and sand and gravel extraction will follow approval processes and requirements in place at the time of surface approvals.	✓
		Future sand and gravel development will be required to aggregate development to be consistent with the approved road network, as determined by the Long-term Road Access Plan and will focus on extraction for within-range use only	✓
3.8	**Management of Peat Activity**	Under the Allocation and Sustainable Management of Peat Resources on Public Land directive, there will be no further allocation of peat resources within caribou ranges.	✓*
		Existing peat Surface Material Lease (SML) agreements will be honoured, and peat extraction will follow the approval conditions in place at the time of SML approvals.	✓
3.9	**Management of Transmission Lines**	Management actions taken on electrical transmission lines have the potential to minimize surface footprint and associated impacts on caribou. Retaining vegetation underneath transmission lines during construction it the preferred approach, followed by vegetation being re-established.	✓
		While minimal access routes through transmission line right-of-ways for maintenance and inspections are needed, strategies to mitigate line-of-site must be employed thoughout the access corridors	✓

3.10	**Management of Natural Disturbance**	Mountain pine beetle infestations and resulting impacts to pine forests, damaged hydrological function, ecosystem function, sensitive sites and wildlife habitat as well as sustainable forest harvest levels. Alberta will prioritize use of Level 1 (single-tree removal of high risk mountain pine beetle sites) control treatments in caribou ranges, approving Level 2 (block or patch harvesting of infestations) treatments as necessary.	✓
		Wildfire: Caribou Range values and priorities such as any rearing facility locations and critical habitat will be identified and shared with wildfire managers to inform landscape wildfire risk management.	✓
		Wildfire: range-specific range plans will be re-evaluted if a wildfire events causing a disturbance of 5% or more of any caribou range (see sections Reporting & Updating)	✓
3.11	**Conservation Areas**	Conservation areas used in support of caribou range planning will be managed to minimize or prevent new land disturbance. Land disturbance associated with oil and gas, mining, and forestry operations are not considered compatible with the management intent of conservation areas.	✓*
		Motorized recreation will be managed to designated off-highway vehicle trails and areas. No new trails, routes or access may be developed without an access plan, trail plan or regulation.	✓*
5.0	**Population Management**	For many caribou populations in Alberta, current rates of population decline from unnaturally high predation rates will result in caribou extirpation prior to recovery of adequate habitat. For this reason, wolf populations will be managed with the goal of maintaining their populations to levels to one that enables caribou population persistence, by achieving population stability or growth.	✓*
		Additional potential management action could be the construction and operation of one or more boreal woodland caribou rearing facilities. These fenced, predator-free enclosures provide areas for adult and calf caribou could reside with low levels of mortality. The intention would be to periodically release some caribou produced in a rearing facility to the surrounding caribou range, to augment the caribou population outside of the facility.	✓*
		Wolf population reductions in Alberta result in increased numbers of ungulates (Including moose, deer and elk). Alberta will manage these increased ungulate populations through a combination of harvest by Indigenous peoples, and general and special hunting licence opportunities.	✓*

6.0	**Monitoring**	The Government of Alberta will issue annual progress reports and five-year stewardship reports for each caribou range. Alberta Environment and Parks will be accountable for range plan reporting, in collaboration with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta Energy, the Alberta Energy Regulator, and other relevant departments and agencies. Alberta Environment and Parks will prepare annual reports. Alberta's monitoring program for the Range Plan will focus on three key areas: 1) Population monitoring; 2) Habitat condition monitoring; and 3) Protection measures monitoring.	✓
		Industrial land users operating in the caribou ranges shall annually report to Albert Environment and Parks an accurate as-built representation of additions or modifications to footprint; the department will define standards for submitted data.	✓
7.0	**Reporting & Range Plan Updates**	The principle of adaptive management incorporated in the Range Plan ensures management approaches can be modified base on new information. If the management actions do not meet intended targets or if caribou populations continue to be challenged, Alberta will update the Range Plan, including engagement with stakeholders and Indigenous peoples.	✓
		If natural disturbance affects more than 5% of the area of a caribou range, more than one year before a regular plan update. Alberta will provide a management response in collaboration with key stakeholders and Indigenous peoples, amending the Range Plan as necessary. Range Plan Updates (Figure 19)	✓
		Alberta will carefully evaluate continued changes in climate, identifying and addressing challenges to caribou populations, and investigating adaptation approaches to the Range Plan as necessary.	✓
		Alberta will review and update the Range Plan at least every five years from its approval. Results of review and updates will be provided to Environment and Climate Change Canada for inclusion in their reporting related to the Federal Recovery Strategies.	✓