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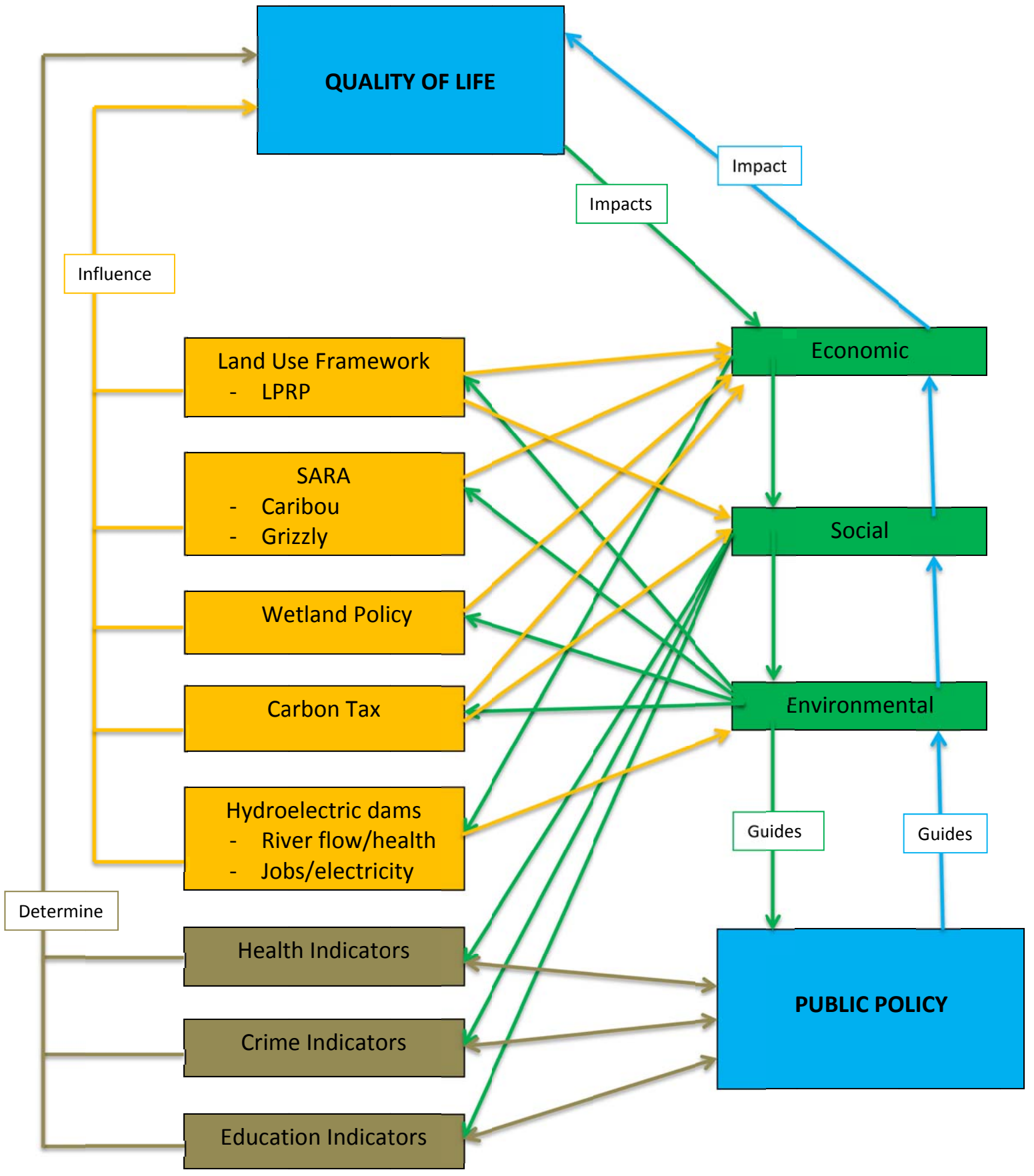
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I have finally managed to (somewhat) visualize what the bigger picture is that I have discovered while pursuing the current caribou challenge. See attached sheet for relationship chart; notice where caribou fit in. This is the framework upon which I feel the CCoA should proceed. There is the opportunity to speak to the big picture of how policy decisions impact remote and rural Alberta. The relationship between overarching policy and its impact on quality of life are not studied in Alberta, and I believe we would all argue that they are not considered by the policy makers. In addition to this is the need to speak to the need for environmental compensation. The exploitation of rural areas occurs solely to feed the economic engines of cities. Current policy now requires that rural Alberta also provide the protection for the damage that has been caused in trying to feed the cities. Currently in Alberta (and Canada) rural regions are being exploited both in terms or providing resources, and then in the need to protect them.





Caribou Communities of Alberta Committee

Woodland Caribou Update – Moving Forward

Mackenzie County
P.O. Box 1690, 9205-100 St
La Crete, Alberta
T0H 2H0

October 10, 2016

Dear CCoA Members,

On September 20, 2016 the Honorable Shannon Phillips, Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), announced that the first woodland caribou range plan will be delayed past its expected October release date.¹ More recently, Scott Milligan, AEP Executive Director of Land and Environmental Planning, suggested that draft range plans for the herds within Northwest Alberta would likely be delivered after Christmas 2016.²

Whilst AEP is working to ensure that effective range plans are implemented by October 2017, Alberta Energy has announced an interim restriction on the sale of mineral rights in all woodland caribou ranges, effective immediately³. This restriction applies to all petroleum and natural gas, coal, metallic, and industrial mineral rights.

This announcement is expected to remain in place until 'stringent operating practices' have been officially defined.⁴ Although environmental organizations are pleased with this recent announcement, some are concerned with what 'stringent operating practices' essentially means; as they maintain that any anthropogenic surface and/or sub-surface disturbance needs to enhance and not detract from woodland caribou recovery efforts.⁵

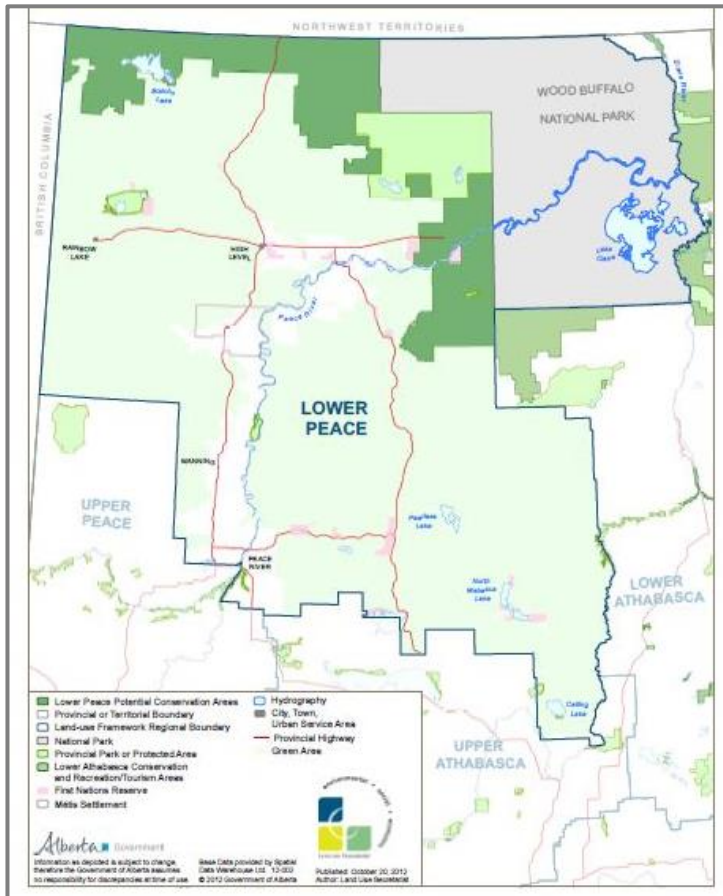


Figure 1: Lower Peace Proposed Conservation Areas (2012)

¹ See Lawson. H, Whitecourt Star (2016)

² Scott Milligan (2016)

³ See Jaremko. D, JWN Energy (2016)

⁴ Alberta Energy (2016) Alberta Wilderness Association (2016)

⁵ See Alberta Wilderness Association (2016)



Caribou Communities of Alberta²

Committee

Woodland Caribou Update – Moving Forward

The delivery of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) in 2012 identified potential conservation areas within the Lower Peace Regional Plan (LPRP) boundary (See Figure 1); 171 townships were proposed by the Land Use Secretariat to fill the ecosystem representation gap unfulfilled by the LARP.⁶ As a result, in 2012 Alberta Energy imposed an interim moratorium for mineral sales within these proposed conservation areas; this interim measure was only to last until the LPRP was implemented.

With the LPRP delivery delays, the interim moratorium has remained in place. Though, AEP could look to remove portions of this moratorium once caribou range plans are in place, and the LPRP is implemented; these restrictions could negatively affect [resource industry] investment within Northwest Alberta for the foreseeable future.

The Boreal Leadership Council (BLC) has developed a vision through their Boreal Forest Conservation Framework (BFCF) (2015), with an objective of protecting at least 50% of the boreal forest across Canada; in a network of large interconnected protected areas, alongside; supporting sustainable communities, world-leading ecosystem-based resource management, and state-of-the-art stewardship practices across the remainder of the landscape.⁷

Under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Canada has committed to achieving 17% protection of terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas globally by the year 2020.⁸ Recently the Government of Alberta has also committed to this target – leading [them] to developing conservation initiatives with more of an eco-systems approach.⁹

Essentially, the Provincial Government is working towards protecting 65% of critical habitat for woodland caribou by October 2017 through range planning; protecting 17% of each natural eco-system (targeting vulnerable natural sub-regions) by 2020 through regional planning; and ensuring that new protection areas are interconnected - providing a wealth of corridors for biodiversity and wildlife.

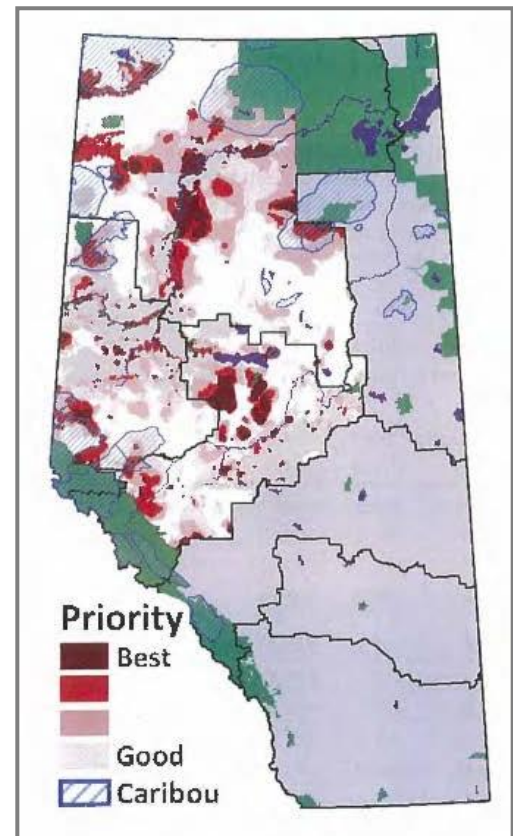


Figure 2: Caribou Zones Expected to Retain Boreal/Foothills Climate in the 2080's (2016)

⁶ See Figure 1. Source: Alberta Government (2012)

⁷ Boreal Leadership Council (2015)

⁸ See Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (2015) – Aichi Target 11 states that by 2020, at least 17% [of the above] should be protected, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystems services. See also United Nations CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020)

⁹ See Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (2012). See also Lower Athabasca Regional Plan Terms of Reference (2009)



Caribou Communities of Alberta³ Committee Woodland Caribou Update – Moving Forward

Some studies have shown that by using available data, combined with innovative conservation selection methods, and software; a balanced biodiverse working landscape can be achieved.¹⁰

The Northern Alberta Conservation Working Group (NACAW) (2016), has explored possibilities that factor in achieving the 65% caribou habitat target [over time]; with the priority selection given to the least disturbed land, as well as the land that is most likely to retain a boreal/foothills climate [sub-regions required for the 17% protection] at the end of the century. As a result, this option appears to potentially reduce the economic impacts on local communities; as the land with more disturbances [i.e. anthropogenic] was avoided (see Figure 2).

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) (2015) developed a 'conservation blueprint tool' which also enables [the planner] to minimize the socio-economic impact and cost of protected areas; by taking 'intactness of the landscape' [existing disturbance level] into consideration.¹¹ By doing so, areas of high linear and anthropogenic disturbance were avoided, and conservation targets were met on more suitable [ideal] land (see Figure 3).

The draft Little Smokey and A La Peche Caribou Range Plan (2016) provided little guidance on how the Province intends to mitigate natural disturbance, such as wildfires and pine beetle infestations within caribou ranges.¹² A representative from Alberta Forestry explains that, previous 'eco-zones' where woodland caribou currently exist, were left to burn if a wildfire began. However, with the implementation of new range plans and the coming LPRP; Alberta Forestry is committed to combatting any wildfire and infestation that initiates within the woodland caribou ranges.¹³

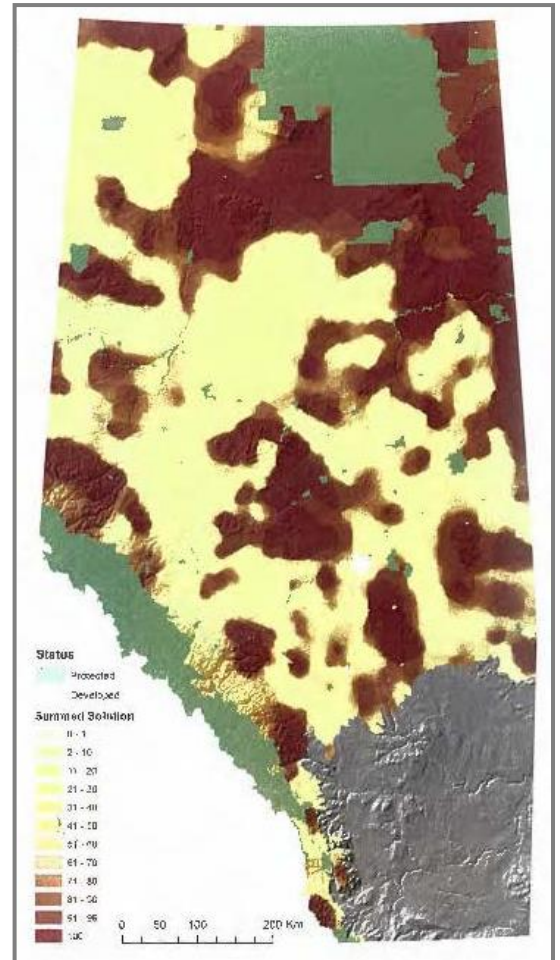


Figure 3: Achieving 50% Biodiversity Conservation Avoiding Higher Anthropogenic Disturbance (2015)

¹⁰ Including; Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (2015); Northern Alberta Conservation Area Working Group (2016); Schneider *et al.* (2012)

¹¹ See Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (2015) Conservation Blueprint of Northwestern Alberta.

¹² See Alberta Government Draft Little Smokey and A La Peche Range Plan (2016) – Page 11 Section 4.8

¹³ Alberta Forestry (High Level) (2016)



Caribou Communities of Alberta Committee

Woodland Caribou Update – Moving Forward

Claims have been made about the potential link between brucellosis and tuberculosis, the diseased wood-bison, and woodland caribou. However, Provincial specialists and reputable experts are quick to discredit this theory – claiming that, although Provincial ‘factsheets’ state that it is possible for caribou to host the diseases, not one case for either disease has ever been discovered in wild caribou across Canada.¹⁴

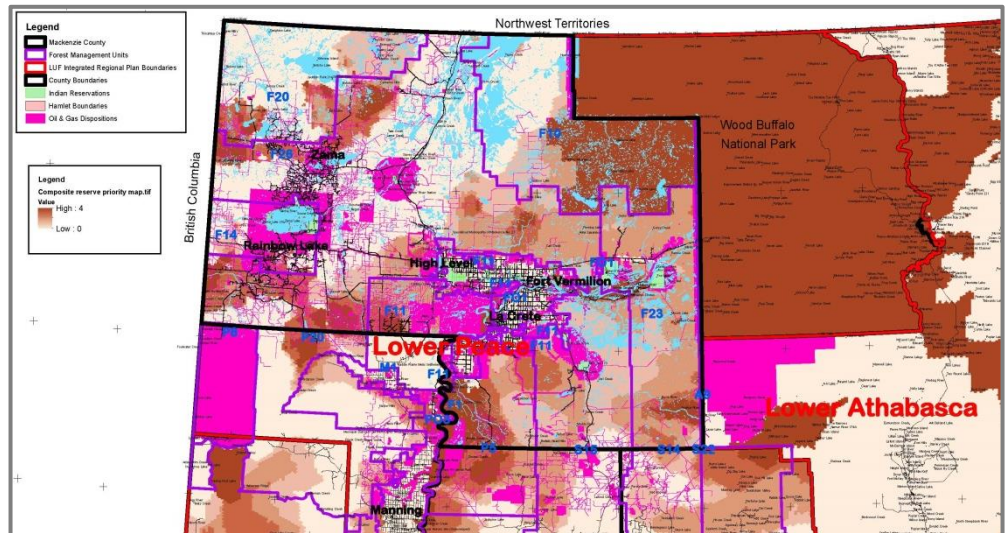


Figure 4: Priority for Natural Sub-Regions, Species at Risk, and Biodiversity Conservation (2016)

Additionally, Dr. Richard Schneider claimed that chronic wasting disease (CWD), fatal to all ungulates, could also play a part in woodland caribou decline.¹⁵ This claim is also quickly dismissed as no case has ever been discovered in wild caribou within Canada, and the concentration of this disease is restricted to the far southeastern corner of the Province.¹⁶

Moving forward it is, perhaps, prudent and beneficial if we begin to adapt innovative conservation planning processes, from the provincial level, down to the regional and local level focuses. Using these methods and available data, to best select critical habitat for woodland caribou; increase [somewhat ideal] protection for natural sub-regions; whilst mitigating the socio-economic impact upon local rural communities.

Mackenzie County is attempting to ‘unlock’ some of the complexities upon the Northern landscape; commencing with a historical look at some of the local economic and social indicators, which could have been influenced by Provincial policy, and identifying the percentage of natural sub-regions available for selection. This type of study presents a number of significant challenges. However, with the forthcoming LPRP stakeholder consultations, we feel a study of this magnitude is both beneficial and necessary.

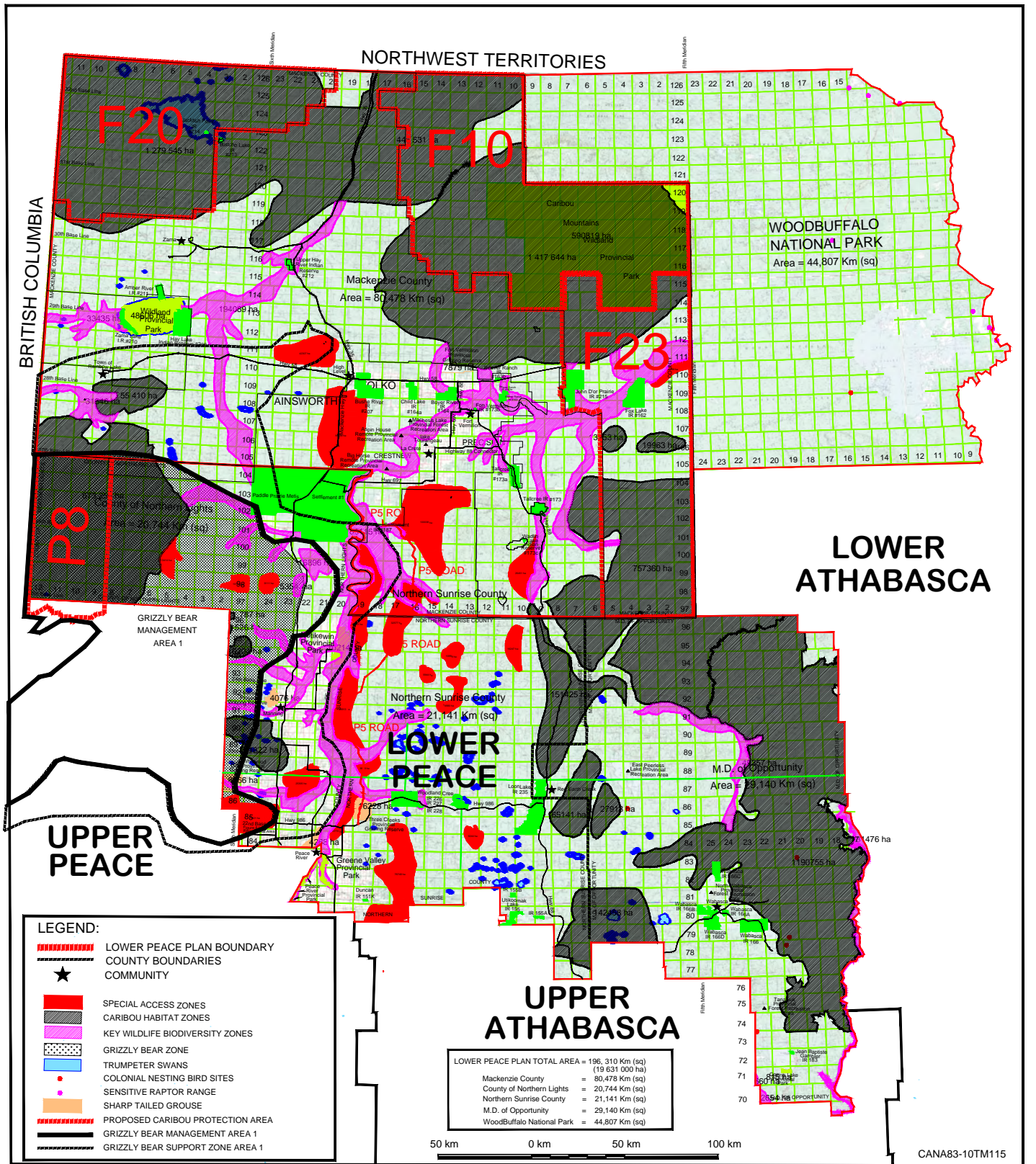
Yours Sincerely,

Byron Peters| Director of Planning and Development| Mackenzie County

¹⁴ See Alberta Government (2004) Brucellosis/Tuberculosis Factsheets; Jim Rennie, Senior Ecologist Paragon Wildlife Research; Margo Pybus Provincial Disease Specialist (2016)

¹⁵ See Schneider *et al.* (2012)

¹⁶ Margo Pybus Provincial Disease Specialist (2016)



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

BRITISH COLUMBIA

WOODBUFFALO NATIONAL PARK
Area = 44,807 Km (sq)

Mackenzie County
Area = 80,478 Km (sq)

LOWER PEACE

LOWER ATHABASCA

UPPER PEACE

UPPER ATHABASCA

LOWER PEACE PLAN TOTAL AREA = 196,310 Km (sq)	
Mackenzie County	= 80,478 Km (sq)
County of Northern Lights	= 20,744 Km (sq)
Northern Sunrise County	= 21,141 Km (sq)
M.D. of Opportunity	= 29,140 Km (sq)
Wood Buffalo National Park	= 44,807 Km (sq)



CANA83-10TM115

LEGEND:

- LOWER PEACE PLAN BOUNDARY
- COUNTY BOUNDARIES
- COMMUNITY
- SPECIAL ACCESS ZONES
- CARIBOU HABITAT ZONES
- KEY WILDLIFE BIODIVERSITY ZONES
- GRIZZLY BEAR ZONE
- TRUMPETER SWANS
- COLONIAL NESTING BIRD SITES
- SENSITIVE RAPTOR RANGE
- SHARP TAILED GROUSE
- PROPOSED CARIBOU PROTECTION AREA
- GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT AREA 1
- GRIZZLY BEAR SUPPORT ZONE AREA 1

Sources:
National Topographic System Maps of Canada
Government of Alberta
Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resources
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Canadian Oilfield Gas Plant Atlas
Atlas of Canada
Atlas of Alberta

Maps:
1:250 000 NTS Maps
Township Grid System of Alberta
Cultivation Intensity Index for the Agricultural Area of Alberta
Areas of Hydrocarbon Resources
Oil Deposits
Oil Sands
Forest Management Units
Alberta Relief

GIS Data:
Alberta Provincial Boundary
Peace Regional Plan Boundary
ESRD Wildlife Zones
ESRD Conservation Zones
ESRD Wildlife Biodiversity Zones
Special Access Zones
Grassland Vegetation Inventory

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