



- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

British Columbia, January 16, 2015: BC's Grey Wolves, *Canis lupus*, are running out of places to hide. There are new plans to kill an estimated 184 wolves living in British Columbia before the snow melts. Whole packs will be chased by helicopters until they are exhausted, and then shot under the guise of recovering dwindling caribou herds in the South Selkirk and South Peace areas. Caribou are in this situation because of us, not because of wolves. The province has allowed energy and recreation industries to destroy critical caribou habitat, facilitating predation by wolves which would otherwise be less able to access remote caribou herds. Despite scientific consensus on the interaction between habitat destruction and predation, the government allowed destructive activities to continue for more than 50 years. As a consequence of our neglect, we are left in a conservation dilemma: is it appropriate to kill one species in the name of legal protection of another? The answer to this question is simpler than the overall solution - critical habitat must be preserved in the first place.

The public deserves to be informed about how their tax dollars are being spent, to what end, and for how long. The public deserves to know how BC's iconic apex predators are treated and how our wildlife and wild places are consistently coming in second place to short-sighted industrial greed. To that end, we outline the critical flaws of BC's death sentence for wolves:

This choice is **scientifically unsound**. This is not the first time aerial gunning and sterilization of wolves has occurred in BC. All past efforts have failed to increase caribou numbers. Similar efforts to protect caribou in Alberta resulted in almost 1000 wolves being killed, and research shows that it is not enough to render caribou populations viable in the long-term. Wolf populations rebound quickly and dispersing wolves fill in the vacant space created following wolf removal - the killing must continue on taxpayer dollars for many decades until habitat recovers naturally. Furthermore, most caribou herds live in multi-predator environments that also support bears, mountain lions, wolverines and lynx. Focussing on removing a single type of predator will not be effective.

This is a **question of animal welfare**. In recent decades we have learned more about the true nature of wolves as emotional and intelligent beings, and their unique and beneficial impacts on biodiversity. Are we as a society prepared to spend the next thirty or more years gunning down families of wolves? This practice is not an approved method under Canada's current guidelines on Approved Animal Care.

This is an **expensive, short-sighted** approach to caribou recovery. Hiring sharpshooters and flying them around remote BC in helicopters in order to destroy entire wolf packs will take hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars. It is morally indefensible that taxpayers are paying for the government's neglect of wildlife. Do BC residents want their money spent on helicopters, or education, health care, ecological restoration, etc.?

Although more than a decade of sterilization and wolf killing eliminated nearly all of the wolves in certain caribou recovery areas, the BC Wolf Management plan (April 17, 2014) states that these efforts, did not result in any measurable benefits for caribou. The threat of losing legally protected species such as mountain caribou highlights an important lesson to be learned by the BC government: ethical and effective conservation should never come second to the interests of industry.

Environmental groups remain concerned that current wolf management lacks a truly ecological foundation. Many argue that both ethical considerations and past research on conservation, ecology, and wolf social dynamics were left out of this part of the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan (MCRIP) and an apparent pre-determined agenda which encourages killing wolves has been exposed.

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High resolution wolf images available for use upon request.

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