

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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PRESS RELEASE

WOLF SLAUGHTER FROM HELICOPTERS COULD BEGIN SOON IN BC'S INTERIOR WETBELT

Sources wishing to remain anonymous have told the Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) that the provincial government will make a decision very soon on whether to begin slaughtering wolves from helicopters. The use of helicopters is an escalation of the widespread slaughter of wolves and cougars that has been happening over the last three years under the excuse of saving mountain caribou. Prey species that attract wolves are also being targeted for increased killing, especially moose. One knowledgeable source told VWS that hunters are now allowed to shoot cows and calves. Cougars are being eliminated in some areas.

Progress Board Stacked with Vested Interests Operates in Secrecy Public and Dissenting Environmental Groups Locked Out

In 2008 ten environmental groups signed confidentiality agreements to collaborate in the creation of a mountain caribou recovery plan that placed heavy reliance on the killing of BC's large carnivores. They were appointed to a "Progress Board" heavily stacked with interests that want to use mountain caribou habitat for profit or pleasure: logging interests, snowmobile clubs and heli-ski businesses.

Despite claims that the Progress Board would keep the public informed, its website on the Internet could no longer be found. The minutes of the monthly meetings are kept secret, which locks the public and all dissenting organizations out of management issues related to this endangered species and its predators. Board members include representatives from ForestEthics (U.S.-based), Wildsight, Conservation Northwest (U.S.-based), CPAWS, B.C. Sierra Club and the BC Nature Federation. These organizations now have a big decision to make. They take public donations and they have a duty to inform the public of their position.

Wolves have limited access to mountain caribou in winter, unless snowmobiles pack down snow. Snowmobiles drive mountain caribou from preferred winter feeding grounds and leave behind tracks for wolves. There are not enough snowmobile closures, and the closed areas are not big enough. In the Revelstoke area, the South Columbia mountain caribou herd has plummeted from 105 in 1994, to 29 in 2002, to just 13 animals in 2009! Yet there have been only minimal snowmobile closures in the areas used by that herd. Instead wolves and cougars are being wiped out, despite the fact that previous scientific studies had shown very little wolf predation on mountain caribou around Revelstoke.

A government claim that it is killing only selected predators in the immediate vicinity of mountain caribou should not be believed. The government has been misleading the public with that claim for several years now. The leghold traps and open bag limits that are currently being used are not selective methods, and they are being implemented over a very large area.

“Scientific studies show that excessive logging has brought moose and increased wolves,” says Anne Sherrod, Chair of VWS. “Yet the mountain caribou recovery plan decreed that over 99% of the Timber Harvesting Land Base would remain open for logging. And mining, which logs huge swathes of forest for roads, hasn’t been curtailed at all.

“VWS has spent years doing everything we could do to protect mountain caribou,” says Sherrod. “Independent scientists assure us that killing top predators will cause much ecosystem damage, and that the caribou can only survive if enough habitat is protected and restored. Saving a species by wrecking its ecosystem doesn’t make sense and will not work in the end.”

BC governments have been trying to wipe out wolves for years. In the 1980s wolves were slaughtered by helicopter killing sprees and baits poisoned with compound 1080, which caused the horrific deaths of any carnivores that ate the broadcast baits. This was all approved by government biologists, one of whom went to the press with the message: “When in doubt, wipe them out.” (*Harrowsmith*, July/Aug. 1984) The public fought tooth and nail to save its wolves, and it won; but now the government is trying to sneak it through by limiting public input to only the groups on the Progress Board that are literally partners of government and have signed confidentiality agreements. See the www.vws.org for more information.

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