



November 22, 2017

Honourable Doug Donaldson,  
Ministry of Forests, lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
Via email: Doug.Donaldson.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Dear Minister Donaldson;

Re: Wolf Kill in BC

I am writing on behalf of BC Nature, the umbrella organization representing 6000 naturalists in 53 clubs in the Province, regarding the killing of wolves in BC. BC Nature strongly opposes the continuation of the wolf kill program initiated by the previous provincial government in their attempt to reverse the disappearance of mountain caribou herds in southern British Columbia. There is no scientific evidence that this cruel and inhumane experiment to snare and trap wolves and fire at them from helicopters has any chance of success where caribou habitat has been degraded and reduced by years of industrial clear-cut logging.

In ranges like the south Selkirks this program is being conducted in a questionable attempt to prolong the tenuous viability of small, isolated herds of mountain caribou on the verge of extirpation. These herds have slipped well below the critical threshold for survival. Gone are the large tracts of lichen-clad old growth forests and subalpine sanctuaries vital for supporting large healthy populations of caribou that maintain viability through inter-herd connectivity. Instead, the small pockets of caribou permanently separated from each other face a high risk of herd extinction from a whole host of threats associated with reduced lichen forage.

Thousands of kilometers of logging roads provide human access and act as corridors for predators. The invasion of all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, heli-skiing operations and snow cats cause stress and open up retreats where caribou rely on security from predators. Avalanches can take their toll while climate change effects on winter snowpack levels can precipitate starvation.

Where only a handful or a dozen caribou remain in marginal habitat, wolf, bear and cougar predation can be considerable. The government would have to kill every wolf in thousands of square kilometres of range to possibly help prolong the life of these threatened herds a few more years in fragmented habitat that will not recover for a hundred years or more. And when wolf killing ceases, their population and predation rates are likely to recover according to the government's 2014 wolf management policy. So the government would have to keep killing in order to try and justify this biologically unfounded experiment when realistically caribou days are numbered.

The government admits in their 2014 wolf management policy statement that: “Attempts to control wolves to reduce predation risks on caribou have been a provincial priority since 2001. Wolf densities have been reduced; however, at this time, a correlation between reduced wolf densities and caribou recovery cannot be substantiated.” If in the past wolf killing has not worked then this current 5 year program is an attempt to intensify wolf killing and make it more lasting. This becomes a senseless exercise that will not return caribou to viable former numbers.

BC Nature would like to see greater priority given to alternative measures to protect dwindling caribou herds, for example: ending industrial activity in the critical habitat; complete closure to backcountry human activity; captive rearing to preserve genetic diversity; and maternal penning.

To be perfectly clear, from the standpoint of conservation biology, the wolf killing program aimed at restoring caribou herd viability is completely unjustified. But the strongest message to the government is one of ethics: a broad sector of the non-government conservation community, backed by a petition representing a large cross section of the public, are united in condemning the senseless slaughter of these remarkable social animals. It is intolerable to allow wolves to suffer a slow painful death from wounds inflicted by snipers in helicopters, to track radio-collared wolves called “Judas” wolves to their pack mates where they can all be gunned down, to allow strangulation by snare and sanction the excruciating agony wolves endure in the jaws of a trap. It must be stopped.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan E. Burger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Yours truly," text.

Alan E. Burger, PhD  
President: BC Nature  
(Federation of BC Naturalists)