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New forest research project works to conserve caribou in western Alberta

Sustainable Forestry Initiative
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Woodland caribou are an iconic but threatened species throughout Canada. They're natural prey to bears and wolves, who can gain easier access to Caribou habitat through forest roads, pipelines, and other human disturbances. In some places, these activities have thrown the predator-prey system off balance, and caribou have declined. Sustainable forest management can help.

Caribou Conservation through Better Cutblock Design

fRI Research (fRI), a non-profit forest research organization, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) have collaborated on a [new study to establish best practices for planning](#) cutblocks, or harvesting areas, with caribou conversation top of mind.

The study spans the forestland of five companies certified to SFI Forest Management standards:

- ANC Timber Ltd.
- C&C Resources Inc.
- Weyerhaeuser
- West Fraser
- Canfor

According to Dr. Laura Finnegan, lead researcher for the fRI Caribou Program, "Our research underlines the commitment of forest managers to maintain the viability of caribou within a shared working landscape in a very active way. The research methods we develop could ultimately be applied across a wide range of land certified to SFI."

The cutblock research results will be translated into Canada-wide habitat models for forest managers to implement in support of healthier caribou populations. Results will also be used to build on caribou recovery collaborations between SFI and the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada, raise public and corporate awareness, and advance knowledge in the global scientific community.

"Conserving species at risk like caribou is an important goal for SFI. Our partnership with fRI is helping us meet our commitment to species at risk across Canada, while continually improving forest management practices that maintain habitat and other conservation values," said Darren Sleep, Sr. Director, Conservation Strategies at SFI.

To date, SFI has contributed \$260,000 in grant funding to caribou research. When combined with partner contributions, the investment is nearly two million dollars. SFI works directly with grantees to build partnerships and facilitate meaningful engagement with landowners certified to SFI Standards, research organizations, governments and aboriginal communities. More than 89 million hectares/220 million acres of forestland is certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard in Canada, meeting strict requirements for forest health, wildlife conservation, biodiversity, and water quality.

To learn more about caribou conservation, sustainable forestry, and SFI, visit <http://www.sfiprogram.org/>.



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