# Alberta faces controversy over Weyerhaeuser logging plan threatening southern mountain caribou



The province of Alberta is facing significant environmental and economic tensions surrounding a logging proposal by the Weyerhaeuser Company, a major American timber corporation. The controversy centres on the draft Upper Smoky Sub-Regional Plan, released by the provincial government on March 25, 2025, which covers an area stretching from Grande Prairie to Grande Cache and extends westward to the British Columbia border. The plan proposes increasing timber harvest activities within the winter range habitats of two threatened southern mountain caribou populations: the Redrock-Prairie Creek and Narraway herds.

Weyerhaeuser, acting as the Forest Management Agreement Holder for this region, is seeking to clear-cut the remaining core forested areas critical for these caribou populations' survival during harsh winter months. The two caribou populations targeted are among three southern mountain caribou groups inhabiting provincial lands in Alberta, all of which are already classified as threatened species.

This logging initiative has sparked debate over the consistency and implications of Weyerhaeuser's position on Canadian timber. The company, alongside other American timber firms, has been lobbying the United States government to impose steep tariffs on softwood lumber imported from Canada. Their argument is that Canadian timber producers benefit from unfair subsidies, as timber in Canada is often sold at below-market rates, effectively distorting competition. Following these campaign efforts, the tariff imposed on Canadian softwood lumber is poised to rise sharply from 14.54% to 34.54%, as reported by CBC News on April 5, 2025.

Kirby Smith, a retired Government of Alberta wildlife biologist, highlights the irony of this situation, noting the contradiction between Weyerhaeuser's demands for protective trade policies and their eagerness to exploit provincial resources at purportedly low prices. Smith questions why Albertans should permit the jeopardising of vulnerable caribou populations to support the profits of an American company. “The inconsistency in their stance is glaring—advocating for tariffs due to supposed unfair advantages while seeking to exploit those very advantages for their benefit,” Smith said.

The wider issue brought to light by this logging proposal is the challenge of balancing forest industry economic interests with ecological sustainability. Southern mountain caribou depend on intact forest habitats for their survival, and escalating timber harvesting activities threaten to disrupt these delicate ecosystems irreversibly. Smith emphasises that while logging is an important source of employment and economic activity, it must be conducted within ethical and environmentally responsible frameworks. This balance is crucial not only for preserving biodiversity but also for ensuring future generations inherit a sustainable natural environment.

The draft Upper Smoky Sub-Regional Plan has been criticised for facilitating an increase in unsustainable logging practices that favour corporate interests over wildlife conservation. Smith argues that provincial authorities and conservation groups must scrutinise such proposals carefully, considering the long-term ecological costs against the immediate economic benefits.

The growing controversy surrounding Weyerhaeuser's proposal highlights broader tensions in Canadian-American trade relations in the forestry sector, intertwined with provincial biodiversity conservation efforts. The critical decision now facing Alberta concerns whether to prioritise short-term economic gains driven by multinational corporations or to safeguard natural heritage, particularly the survival of endangered southern mountain caribou populations.

The Jasper Fitzhugh is reporting on this complex unfolding scenario, emphasising the multifaceted nature of the issues and the need for transparent, fair, and ecologically mindful policies governing both trade and natural resource management in the region.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ctvnews.ca/edmonton/article/conservationists-say-land-use-plan-will-decimate-at-risk-caribou-herds-in-northwestern-alberta/> - This article discusses conservationists' concerns that the Upper Smoky Sub-Regional Plan will negatively impact at-risk caribou herds in northwestern Alberta, aligning with the article's mention of the plan's potential effects on the Redrock-Prairie Creek and Narraway herds.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/tariffs-may-accelerate-canadian-lumber-industrys-southward-shift-hunt-new-2025-03-20/> - This Reuters article reports on how increased U.S. tariffs on Canadian lumber imports could lead Canadian lumber producers, including Weyerhaeuser, to shift operations to the U.S. South, supporting the article's point about Weyerhaeuser's lobbying for higher tariffs and its impact on Canadian timber producers.
* <https://www.lesprom.com/en/news/Weyerhaeuser_shares_rise_as_U_S_tariffs_hit_Canadian_lumber_imports_117682/> - This article highlights how Weyerhaeuser's stock is rising due to new U.S. tariffs on Canadian lumber imports, indicating the company's potential benefit from the tariffs, as mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-orders-new-tariff-probe-into-us-lumber-imports-2025-03-02/> - This Reuters article reports on President Trump's order for a new trade investigation into U.S. lumber imports, potentially adding tariffs to existing duties on Canadian softwood lumber, which relates to the article's mention of the U.S. imposing steep tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber.
* <https://www.apnews.com/article/ae55bcae89a8ad78814c3dbce69e435f> - This article discusses how tariffs on lumber and appliances are set to increase costs for new homes and remodeling projects, supporting the article's point about the economic implications of the logging proposal and tariffs.
* <https://www.nahb.org/blog/2024/08/canadian-lumber-tariffs> - This article from the National Association of Home Builders discusses the U.S. Department of Commerce's decision to raise tariffs on imports of Canadian softwood lumber products from 8.05% to 14.54%, providing context to the article's mention of the tariff increase.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMi0wFBVV95cUxPckFHZEZEa1J5c08wblcyME91NVNiZDRrWndySENfN3FYdnhkUFJBR3FfM2Foc28tNkV3cV9kN0l3SHM3TjNOTHpIVXZXY2p2ZHV2UEVPTjFtSEJmTmpmc0F1YkdLOEw1V3BQWFZLU3pGNjZqU1VXZnp0amEzc2lBUWdCN0RzQ3B2S3pVdHpGMnRPZmpGMDY0bDhUcGUzTXpUS2syMGctbmNVd3dPemdhOGxadFllbHlUWEpUbHpZZU5lZUZ5S2FDbFFSaDZmQ1N1VE9B?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data