



Alberta Government's latest plan for Lower Athabasca region protects little area for woodland caribou and whooping cranes but allocates lots of area for oil sands leases

Edmonton, September 22 2011. The Alberta Government's recently announced *Draft Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 2011-2021* allocates much more area to oil sands leases than to conservation areas for whooping cranes and woodland caribou, according to a report issued today by Global Forest Watch Canada.

The Alberta Government released its Draft Lower Athabasca Regional Plan on August 29, 2011. In that draft plan, the government stated, as one of the highlights, that two-million hectares will be set aside for conservation areas and identified where those candidate areas are located.

Oil sands leases underlay 66% of the whooping crane migration zone that is within the plan area; only 18% of the whooping crane migration zone will have conservation areas.

Oil sands leases underlay 66% of the woodland caribou herd/population areas that are within the plan area; only 9% of the woodland caribou herd/population areas will have conservation areas.

"Although the rationale for these 'set asides' as stated in the draft plan is to satisfy the need to strike a balance between development and conservation in the region, one has to ask where the balance is if the vast majority of the lands are set aside for oil sands development versus for the conservation of iconic and sensitive species such as whooping crane and woodland caribou," says Peter Lee, Executive Director of Global Forest Watch Canada and author of the report.

"The Alberta Government states these conservation areas will help achieve environmental objectives—especially those for biodiversity—by maintaining ecological systems and processes for biodiversity, but one has to ask how is this possible if at least some these areas will allow logging, motorized use, and access to the development of existing oil, gas and oils sands tenures, as described by the Alberta Government in the plan," continues Peter Lee.

The Alberta Government has stated its intention to submit the plan to Cabinet for approval at some future time, without further discussion and debate in the Alberta Legislature.

Download the report at: www.globalforestwatch.ca (Lee, P. G. 2011. Conservation-type areas in the Draft Lower Athabasca Regional Plan, Alberta: Implications for whooping crane migration zone and woodland caribou herd/population areas. Global Forest Watch Canada. Edmonton, Alberta. International Year of Forests Publication #12. 5 pp.)

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