

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Scientists Begin Critical Research Aimed at Protecting Canada's At-Risk Caribou and Grizzly Bear Populations**

**Washington, DC and Ottawa, ON** – As grizzly bear populations in western Canada make their way into winter hibernation this month scientists in Alberta are embarking on their next phase of field research, the results of which will go a long way towards protecting the province's at-risk grizzly and caribou populations. The research will also have implications on grizzly and caribou habitats in boreal forest regions nation-wide.

"We're pleased to be able to assist this important project with a \$100,000 Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Conservation and Community Partnerships grant," says Kathy Abusow, SFI President and CEO. "The grant will allow researchers at the University of Saskatchewan to investigate the response of threatened species to linear features and landscape changes in a managed forest ecosystem."

"We're incredibly excited to start on the analysis phase of this project and produce tangible results that land managers can use to protect and restore habitats while maintaining key economic activity in our forests," says Gordon Stenhouse, wildlife biologist and grizzly bear expert. "Our goal is to ensure the important information we're gathering will be used by the Government of Alberta and other leaders, as well as land managers, to help inform sustainable resource development within Canada's boreal forest."

During the first year of this three-year project, researchers are focusing on preparing LiDAR maps, highly detailed remote sensing satellite imagery, which will help them understand the movement of both species. Analysis of detailed animal movements will begin shortly while preparations for the caribou winter field data collections are also well underway.

"The collaborative nature of this project demonstrates the continued commitment of the forestry sector to maintain species at-risk on a shared working landscape," says Andrew de Vries, SFI Vice-President, Conservation and Indigenous Relations. "This project is absolutely in line with SFI's important conservation and research requirements, which are aimed at promoting biological diversity, protecting wildlife habitat and helping SFI participants manage special forest sites."

One of the biggest issues facing both caribou and grizzlies is habitat change brought on by human activity. By combining previous data sets and maps of habitat disturbances with new technology of LiDAR imagery to aid in understanding habitat recovery, the University of Saskatchewan, in collaboration with Weyerhaeuser and West Fraser Ltd., is hoping to gain greater insights on how caribou and their predators perceive and respond to the dynamic forest landscape across space and time.

In addition, the Foothills Research Institute is playing an instrumental role in this project, not only contributing long-term telemetry data sets on caribou and grizzly bears that have made this research possible, but also providing a base in Hinton, Alberta for researchers to prepare their LiDAR maps during the first year.



Photo credit: Foothills Research Institute bear and caribou programs

## **About Sustainable Forestry Initiative**

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