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## **The Sylx Okanagan Nation Renews Call for Emergency Protection as Southern Mountain Caribou Face Imminent Extirpation in Sylx Territory**

**stqa?tkwłniwt, Westbank, Sylx Okanagan Nation Territory:** The Sylx Okanagan Nation is renewing its call for the Government of Canada to immediately issue an Emergency Protection Order under Section 80 of the Species at Risk Act (SARA) to protect endangered styłca? (caribou) and their critical habitat.

The Sylx Okanagan Nation formally petitioned the Government of Canada on June 1, 2026, requesting an Emergency Protection Order after decades of continued delays by both the Provincial and Federal governments. Despite repeated warnings from First Nations and scientists, habitat loss continues across the ranges of endangered styłca?, pushing the remaining herds toward extirpation.

"Every year governments delay meaningful habitat protection, we lose more of what cannot be replaced," said Cailyn Glasser, ONA Natural Resources Manager. "The science has been clear for years. The solutions have been identified. What has been missing is the political will to act."

Within Sylx Okanagan Territory, habitat alteration and loss remain the greatest threats to styłca?. Recent best-available scientific research demonstrates that habitat loss continues to accelerate across the remaining home ranges, while forest harvesting and other industrial development persist within critical habitat essential to the species' survival.

The consequences have been devastating. Eight Southern Group herds have already been functionally extirpated and as recently as 2023, the Columbia South herd was declared extirpated. Today, despite years of dedicated recovery efforts, the Central Selkirk herd is considered at imminent risk of extirpation. Once that herd is lost, only one viable styłca? herd will remain within Sylx Okanagan Territory.

That remaining herd has the lowest level of habitat protection in the Southern Group, with approximately 35 percent of its core habitat protected. Forest harvesting and other industrial activities continue within this critical habitat, further reducing the herd's chances of long-term survival.

The Sylx Okanagan Nation is deeply concerned that British Columbia has failed to implement habitat protection recommendations jointly developed in 2025 by First Nations working alongside Provincial and Federal representatives. Instead, economic development continues to be prioritized over the recovery of an endangered species, despite clear evidence that these activities are contributing directly to the decline of styłca?.

In September 2025, the Syilx Okanagan Nation declared a styítcaʔ Protection Order, affirming its inherent responsibilities and jurisdiction to protect styítcaʔ as sacred relatives and to uphold Syilx laws, Title, Rights, and responsibilities to tmxʷulaxʷ for future generations.

"Our Protection Order affirmed what our people have always known—that we have a responsibility to care for styítcaʔ and the lands that sustain them," Councillor Jordan Coble, ONA Natural Resource Chair stated. "Our petition to Canada was not simply a request for action; it was an exercise of our responsibility to protect a relative whose survival is inseparable from the health of our Territory."

The Nation acknowledges Xatsull First Nation's leadership in reinforcing this call and stands united with First Nations throughout the range of Southern Mountain Caribou in urging the Government of Canada to fulfill its legal obligations under the Species at Risk Act. The accelerating decline of Southern Mountain Caribou is not confined to one Nation's territory but represents a regional conservation crisis requiring immediate federal intervention. With the imminent loss of another herd in Syilx Okanagan Territory, emergency protection is no longer about preventing future declines—it is about preventing the complete disappearance of styítcaʔ from much of their historic range.

"The window to act is closing," said Chief ki low na Clarence Louie, Tribal Chair of the ONA. "Without immediate protection of critical habitat, future generations will inherit the consequences of decisions that governments had every opportunity to prevent. Canada must act now."

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*The Okanagan Nation Alliance is committed to conserve, manage, co-manage the wildlife, lands and waters of the Nation's territory. The Syilx Okanagan Nation affirms that its laws and responsibilities originate from time immemorial, and that these continue to guide the Nation's stewardship and decision-making today, and for future generations to come.*

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