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Media Release

“NRDC Does Not Speak for Us”

Alliance of Ontario First Nations and Non-First Nations asks American Activist Group to End the Harmful Rhetoric and Join in Support of Evidence-Based Policy Development

March 8th, 2018 – “Why is NRDC, an American activist group, lobbying our provincial government and attempting to frustrate consultation and accommodation with First Nations communities and impacted municipalities?” said Wendy Landry, President of NOMA and Mayor of Shuniah. She continued, “NRDC does not speak for us or the harmonious relationship we have with our natural resources. We are respectfully asking that they stop these one-sided and misinformed attacks that end up harming our natural resources, and join us in support of the positive announcement from the MNRF.”

Natural Resources Defense Council’s (NRDC) downtown Manhattan office is 2100 kilometers (1300 miles) from Red Rock Indian Band on the northern shore of Lake Superior in Ontario, Canada. Red Rock is a First Nations community who are proud of their many accomplishments, with record low unemployment and many residents taking prominent and powerful positions within local government and the private sector. This is a community that has taken impressive steps towards achieving environmental, social, and economic self-sustainability.

Chief of Red Rock Indian Band, Edward Wawia, said, “My community has grown our forestry businesses over the last number of years, and we are proud of our accomplishments as First Nations people.” He continued, “We know how to manage our own lands. For others outside of our traditional areas to claim they know better, or appear to be speaking on behalf of First Nations, perpetuates an outdated and colonialist attitude to natural resource management.”

Ontario’s existing forest management framework provides this community, and many others like it across the province, with not only economic opportunities for their people, but also an opportunity to share and contribute traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)¹. This knowledge has been passed down over thousands of years and assists in shaping the future of our vast Crown forests.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry’s (MNRF) January 19, 2018 [regulation proposal](#), if approved, will allow communities like Red Rock, a brief opportunity to shape future species at risk policy and provide MNRF with a better understanding of the impacts of climate change, cumulative impacts of all activity on a broad, dynamic land base, and the social and

¹ Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), *Forest Management Planning Manual*, 2017. <https://files.ontario.ca/forest-management-planning-manual.pdf>

economic impacts. This will be accomplished through the formation of an independent panel, but they need time, and 2-years will not be enough.

In a March 6, 2018 blog post NRDC states:

“Ontario doubled down on a policy that jeopardizes the future of boreal caribou and other at-risk species in the province, gifting the logging industry two more years of exemptions under Ontario’s Endangered Species Act (ESA). These exemptions, as we reported in January, have severe implications for threatened boreal caribou in the province, giving industry a near-carte blanche to degrade and destroy critical habitat.”

As stated in MNRF’s proposal, “the ministry is proposing that an independent panel be formed that will provide advice on consideration of species at risk in Crown forest management.” This is not an exemption from managing species at risk²³⁴, but an opportunity to develop a solution with all parties at the table.

Ontario has been recognized as having some of the best managed forests in the world by providing for environmental values, species at risk management, and as a large contributor to our provincial and national economies. President of FONOM and Mayor of Kapuskasing, Al Spacek, said, “Prohibiting human activities, combined with the suppression of natural disturbances, will be detrimental to the sustainability of our managed Crown forests.” He continued, “Carefully planned harvesting allows for an essential reset of forest age to maintain a continuous supply of caribou habitat. Activists ignore the fact that as boreal forests get old and transitions into different forest types, they become less suitable for caribou.”

President and CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, Jamie Lim, concluded by saying, “NRDC’s most recent annual report shows total revenue of \$146 million and total assets of \$304 million; eclipsing the financials of many forest companies and communities operating here in Ontario. They have no business working against an independent process designed to provide for species at risk while minimizing the social and economic impacts to communities and the sector.”

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² Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), *Forest Management Guide for Boreal Landscapes*, 2014. <https://dr6j45jk9xcmk.cloudfront.net/documents/2783/guide-boreal-landscape-aoda.pdf>

³ Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), *Forest Management Guide for Conserving Biodiversity at the Stand and Site Scales*, 2010. <https://dr6j45jk9xcmk.cloudfront.net/documents/4816/stand-amp-site-guide.pdf>

⁴ Environment Canada and Climate Change (ECCC), *Report on the Progress of Recovery Strategy Implementation for the Woodland Caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou), Boreal population in Canada for the Period 2012 to 2017*, 2017. http://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/plans/rs_caribou_boreal_caribou_0912_e1.pdf