

A SNOWMOBILERS GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN BC



*To preserve our riding environment,
we must protect our natural environment*



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Environmental Stewardship Resource Manual: To preserve our riding environment, we must protect our natural environment.

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Caribou in the Kootenay Pass by Garry Beaudry

Images: Courtesy of the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Enjoying the outdoors and sharing in the wonder that makes British Columbia a magnificent province are what makes snowmobiling a popular activity. Without a healthy natural environment, all British Columbians would lose an integral element of what defines us as a province. We feel very strongly about the need to protect the health of our natural environment for generations to come.

The British Columbia Snowmobile Federation (BCSF) represents snowmobilers across the province. As an organization, we are defined by a tremendous volunteer commitment to providing access to B.C.'s wilderness for all to enjoy.



The B.C. Commercial Snowmobile Operators Association (BCCSOA) represents commercial snowmobile operators and guides. Its mandate includes acting as environmental stewards and promoting backcountry ethics and awareness within the snowmobile industry.

People who know and understand British Columbia's natural heritage develop a sense of ownership and pride in the areas in which they snowmobile. We want people from all backgrounds to care about the wilderness experiences our province has to offer. By providing access to many areas that are otherwise inaccessible in the winter, we can help foster this sense of ownership and pride among British Columbians.

At the same time, we must take care of our natural environment. We must strive to minimize our effect on the environment while carrying out activities that can help foster the recovery of endangered species and habitats, and protect sensitive areas for future generations to enjoy.

The Environmental Stewardship Program is an essential initiative of the BCSF with goals shared by the BCCSOA and supported by the B.C. Government. The program is directed at the protection and preservation of the natural environment through promotion of our wilderness experiences. A logic model of the program is included as Appendix D.

This manual is intended to help snowmobilers practice environmental stewardship. It will:

- outline and/or reference best practices for snowmobilers to adhere to while engaging in the sport of snowmobiling;
- promote and instil ownership and pride in the areas where we ride; and
- represent our commitment to making a difference.

The manual will be updated as knowledge changes.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Environmental stewardship means taking care of our environment through our actions. It means practising sensible and responsible management of our resources, through what we do, for the benefit of present and future generations.

All sectors of society share responsibility for the health of the environment. We all have a role to play to ensure that our pristine wilderness is here in the future.

Why is sharing in environmental stewardship important to snowmobilers?

As more people snowmobile, the pressure on wildlife increases. There is greater potential for stressing wildlife or damaging the environment. By avoiding activities that stress wildlife or damage the environment, snowmobilers are reducing their impact on the natural landscapes and wildlife that are an integral part of the snowmobiling experience. Taking care of our natural spaces benefits the sport of snowmobiling.

3.0 CODE OF ETHICS AND RESPONSIBLE RIDING

As a snowmobiler, you can do a lot to demonstrate environmental stewardship in the areas you visit and to ensure that you and other snowmobilers are responsible riders.

Please follow the Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics:

Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics

I understand and accept the risks associated with snowmobiling and I will take responsibility for my own actions.

As a responsible snowmobiler

- I will ride in a manner that is a credit to our recreation.
- I will influence other snowmobilers to adhere to this Code of Ethics.
- I will respect the rights of others, including property owners and other outdoor enthusiasts.
- I will protect and preserve our natural environment.
- I will ride in a responsible manner and use only trails, areas, or roads open to snowmobiles.
- I will not harass or harm wildlife or the natural surroundings.
- I will minimize my impact on the environment.

- I will ride smart, be prepared, and stay in control.
- I will check ice and weather conditions before riding.
- I will help those in distress.
- I will obey all laws and rules governing our recreation.
- I will promote proper snowmobile education and training.
- I will practice Zero Tolerance with respect to impaired riding.

Responsible Riding and Signage

Responsible riding means knowing, paying attention to, and obeying signage. See Appendix F for important land use signs that you should know. These examples are from “Standards for Snowmobile Trail Signing and Placement in British Columbia 2007” prepared by the BC Snowmobile Federation in partnership with the province of British Columbia.

4.0 PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

The B.C. government is responsible for managing wildlife and wildlife habitat in B.C. through various legal and policy tools that are outlined in the following sections. In cooperation with several external groups, including the British Columbia Snowmobile Federation, the provincial government manages activities to protect wildlife and their habitat to ensure their survival.

4.1 Operating Practices

What can snowmobilers do to reduce disturbance to wildlife and wildlife habitat?

Before you snowmobile in an area, find out if it might be used by wildlife. Pay particular attention to wildlife such as Mountain Caribou, the most threatened of all caribou in B.C.

Check the searchable databases at the *Species at Risk Act* Public Registry and Ministry of Environment Conservation Data Centre for more information on species at risk (see Resources section). Local clubs may also be able to provide this information.



Before heading out, find out if there are snowmobile closures in the area where you intend to snowmobile. The contacts are listed in the brochure “Snowmobiling and Caribou in British Columbia” (see Resources section). Local clubs may also be able to provide local information about closures.

Many closures, including motorized closures, are regulated under the *Wildlife Act*. Details and maps for these closures are listed in the “Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis,” which can be obtained free at many sporting goods stores and online (see Resources section).

For information on local snowmobile closures, call 1-888-655-8855, or refer to the online “Snowmobile Guide for the Columbia and Rocky Mountains of British Columbia” (see Resources section). The website also provides useful information on best operating practices, backcountry etiquette, user conduct and safe sledding, wildlife management, what snowmobilers can do to reduce their impact, and contacts for more information.

The website provides links to maps showing Managed Snowmobile Areas, Private and Public Lands, Regulatory or Voluntary Snowmobile Closures, Snowmobile Access with Restrictions, Parks and Protected Areas, and First Nations Reserves. These maps will be revised as new information is made available, and as agreements are negotiated.

If you are unfamiliar with an area, you can hire a licensed guide to lead you; areas and operators can be found through the BCCSOA (see contacts in Section 7.0).

Best Operating Practices in Wildlife Habitat

- Make every effort to research an area before snowmobiling there, including looking for local maps and other information pertinent to snowmobiling in that location.
- Don't ride in areas designated as closed to snowmobiling.
- Obey all posted signs.
- If wildlife is encountered, refrain from approaching.
- Stay on your snowmobile.
- If wildlife is encountered on a road or designated trail, turn off the engine and remain on your sled. Wait until the wildlife have moved off the road or trail before continuing and make every effort to stay as far away from the wildlife as safely possible.
- If wildlife is encountered in a play area, don't approach them. Shut down your machine to give the animals a chance to move away, then leave the area and refrain from riding within sight of the wildlife.
- If wildlife tracks are observed, don't follow the tracks.
- Ride only where the snow is deeper than 30 cm.
- It's okay to take photographs of wildlife if from a respectful and safe distance.

These practices, in relation to caribou, are detailed in the *Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Management of Snowmobiling in Mountain Caribou Habitats* (see Appendix C).

What can snowmobilers do so they don't harm wildlife and plants?

You can reduce the potential for harming other wildlife and plants by following the Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics and the Best Operating Practices outlined in this manual.

Future forest harvests depend on careful stewardship of forest plantations. Seedlings can be permanently damaged if the growing tips are damaged by snowmobiling or other activities. Damaging seedlings is considered to be damage to Crown timber. Be sure to check with the local Forest District office to find out if riding in particular cut blocks and plantations is allowed.

4.2 Species at Risk

Mountain Caribou: A Species of Concern

All caribou in B.C. are of interest to wildlife managers. The Woodland Caribou population in southern B.C. and Alberta is designated as “threatened” under the *Species at Risk Act*. Mountain Caribou are an ecotype of Woodland Caribou and have been designated as “red-listed” by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre.

To survive through the winter, Mountain Caribou depend on their use of the same high country open areas that snowmobilers use. Interaction with snowmobiles may cause them to move into less suitable habitat where they have less chance of surviving. For further discussion of this topic, see the article by D.R. Seip and colleagues.¹

For more information about Mountain Caribou, see the online brochure, “Snowmobiling and Caribou in British Columbia” and the Species at Risk Coordination Office website, which outlines the provincial Mountain Caribou Recovery Strategy and Recovery Implementation Plan (see Resources section).

Species at risk recovery strategies, including those for Woodland Caribou, can also be found on the *Species at Risk Act* Public Registry website (see Resources section).

More information on species and ecosystems at risk can also be found on the Ministry of Environment Species and Ecosystems at Risk website (see Resources section).

¹ Seip, D.R., C.J. Johnson, G.S. Watts. 2007. Displacement of Mountain Caribou from Winter Habitat by Snowmobiles. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 71(5):1539–1544.

4.3 Wildlife Guidelines for Backcountry Tourism and Commercial Recreation in B.C.

Guidelines were developed to ensure that backcountry recreation activities are conducted in a manner that does not compromise the current distribution of wildlife, the sustainability of their populations, or the integrity of their habitats.

The guidelines define desired behaviours, limits for backcountry activities, desired results, and indicators to measure whether the results are being achieved (B.C. Government, Ministry of Environment, Environmental Stewardship Division).

These guidelines were developed to ensure that tourism, recreational activities, and environmental values can coexist. The guidelines are organized first by recreational activity and then by habitat (ecosystem) type to make it easier to find information about desired behaviours and results.

See Appendix B for guidelines that are relevant to snowmobiling activities.



4.4 Other Policies

The Ministry of Environment is currently preparing a Wildlife Program Plan to guide staff in the management of wildlife in B.C. The plan includes a goal related to conserving wildlife with an objective related to fostering stewardship. The significant role played by non-government organizations and stakeholder groups in stewardship of wildlife is recognized and promoted.

4.5 Compliance with Legislation and Regulations

The provincial government, through the Ministry of Environment (MoE), Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA), and the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB), is committed to working with stakeholder groups to achieve compliance with environmental legislation and regulations. Government recognizes stakeholders such as snowmobile clubs as partners who share an interest in upholding the law for the benefit of the environment and the recreational opportunities it provides.

Through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or other stewardship agreements, shared responsibility for monitoring compliance can be negotiated. These partnerships may involve a commitment to conducting joint patrols, sharing monitoring data, sharing the costs associated with the production of promotional materials and signs, installing and maintaining signs, and even joint reporting of results. Please familiarize yourself with the MOU between the BCSF and B.C. Government agencies (see Appendix C).

Through self-monitoring and peer advocacy, clubs can positively influence the behaviour of their members and of riders visiting from other jurisdictions to ensure that non-compliance by a few individuals does not tarnish the reputation of riders generally, or result in increased legislation of closed areas. Establishing and maintaining cooperative, respectful working relationships between local community clubs and tour operators and the provincial government will benefit everyone.

The Ministry of Environment is currently developing some guidance to help with the negotiation and development of compliance protocols between the Ministry and stewardship groups. These guidelines will be available soon.

For information about local closures and agreements in place, call 1-888-655-8855, or check the “Snowmobile Guide for the Columbia and Rocky Mountains of British Columbia” (www.snowmobile.gov.bc.ca).

Snowmobiling on provincial Crown land in British Columbia is governed by various statutes and regulations. The onus is on you as a rider to understand any restrictions that may be in place in areas where you plan to snowmobile. Acts and regulations that may apply are described below.

NOTE: References to legislation and descriptions of the requirements and obligations found in various Acts are provided only for convenience. **This information does not constitute legal advice.** Please consult a lawyer if you need specific information, guidance, or direction of a legal nature.

Electronic copies of provincial statutes and regulations are available at <http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/>. Federal statutes and regulations may be searched at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/>.

Ecological Reserve Act

B.C. has many designated Ecological Reserves where motorized access is prohibited.

Forest and Range Practices Act

Section 46(1.1) prohibits activity on Crown land that results in damage to the environment except under defined conditions. Allowing petroleum products or other harmful substances to enter a stream is considered “damage” under Section 3 of the *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation*.

Section 52 prohibits a person from cutting, damaging, or destroying Crown timber unless they are authorized to do so. Injuring seedlings or the growing tips of seedlings in cut blocks is considered damaging Crown timber.

Section 57 prohibits the construction, rehabilitation, or maintenance of trails or other recreational facilities without authorization. Terms of use for established recreation sites and trails are outlined in the *Forest Recreation Regulation*.

Recreation uses on Crown land can be restricted or prohibited anywhere under Section 58 in order to manage recreation use or to protect a recreation or range resource.

Section 3(3) of the *Forest Service Road Use Regulation* prohibits anyone from operating a snowmobile on a Forest Service Road if it has been snowplowed or is otherwise fit for travel by motor vehicles other than snowmobiles.

Land Act

Under the *Land Act*, the Minister can temporarily create a reserve for any purpose in the public interest (Section 16). This has been used, for example, to restrict the issuance of commercial backcountry recreation tenures in specific areas for specific periods of time to protect habitat for Mountain Caribou. Prohibitions on the use of motor vehicles in specific areas are enabled under Section 66 of the *Land Act*.

Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act

This Act prohibits the operation of an all-terrain vehicle “in such a manner as to drive, harass, chase, run over, injure or kill wildlife,” in a negligent or reckless manner or on private property without the consent of the owner (Section 4). Specific area and timing prohibitions on the operation of all-terrain vehicles are also enabled in associated regulations. This section is also subject to restrictions and prohibitions made under the *Park Act*, *Forest Act*, or *Land Act* and their associated regulations.

The *Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act* also requires that snowmobiles be registered and marked with identification numbers in B.C. (Section 2). This section also states that out-of-province snowmobilers may enter and operate in B.C. for up to 30 days, provided they are registered with their province of residence and display a permit, or obtain special permission to operate in B.C., if their province does not require registration.

Park Act

The *Park Act* generally limits the use of motor vehicles to roads or designated areas (*Park and Recreation Area Regulation* Section 24). Snowmobiling is allowed under permit in some provincial parks in specific situations (Section 16).

Restrictions in National Parks in B.C. are similar and are enacted by Federal law (see Canada *National Parks Act*).

Protected Areas of British Columbia Act and Environment and Land Use Act

These Acts enable the creation of new parks and other protected areas, and administration of land use and resource development, which may restrict snowmobile use.

The Federal Species at Risk Act

The federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) protects all listed species at risk and their critical habitat on federal lands (e.g., national parks, Canadian Forces bases, First Nations reserves), and listed migratory birds and aquatic species at risk on all lands. Species considered at risk are designated by the federal Minister of Environment on recommendation by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). COSEWIC is a committee of experts that assesses technical information related to the status of different species.

The government of B.C. signed the *Canada-B.C. Agreement on Species at Risk* with the federal government, in 2005. This agreement provides an administrative framework for cooperative delivery of protection and recovery for species at risk in B.C. The agreement is founded on the principles of the collaborative relationship between governments on species at risk issues established by the earlier *National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk* (1996).

Some species at risk are also protected through the *Federal Fisheries Act*, the *Migratory Bird Convention Act*, and the *Canada National Parks Act*.

Wildlife Act

Under the *Wildlife Act* it is an offence to alter, destroy, or damage wildlife habitat in a manner that is harmful to wildlife or wildlife habitat in a wildlife management area. A Regional Manager may also make orders prohibiting a person from entering into, altering, destroying, or damaging vegetation in and disturbing or harassing wildlife in a wildlife management area (Section 7). It is also an offence to use a motor vehicle to herd or harass wildlife (Section 27). Associated regulations enabled under sections 108 and 109 of the Act prohibit or restrict public access and the use of some or all motor vehicles in specific areas (*Motor Vehicle Prohibition Regulation* and *Public Access Prohibition Regulation*).

New or amended motor vehicle and access restrictions that have come into force since the publication of the regulations on the Queen's Printer website are printed in the annual "Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis" available online at www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/hunting/regulations/.

The *Wildlife Act* was amended in 2004 to enhance the ability of the province to list and protect species at risk and their habitat. These amendments must be brought into force through regulation.

5.0 PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SNOWMOBILE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT

In 2006, the British Columbia Snowmobile Federation (BCSF) expressed an interest in developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the provincial government regarding Woodland Caribou recovery and snowmobile activities. In response, an MOU was prepared by representatives of the BCSF and the ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Lands, and Tourism, Sport and the Arts. This MOU was signed on March 22, 2007, and is currently in the implementation stage (see Appendix C).

In the spirit of shared stewardship, and under the agreement of this MOU, the BC Snowmobile Federation and the represented government parties have been working together on stewardship outreach activities. These activities are aimed at educating snowmobilers about:

- snowmobiling and its effect on the environment and wildlife;
- best operating practices;
- caribou and wildlife ecology;
- voluntary compliance with regulations; and
- the importance of collaborating with other organizations to preserve the future of the sport and the natural environment.

The BCSF has been the voice of its member clubs; it has encouraged partnerships with the government at both the provincial and local levels.

At the local level, several snowmobile clubs and societies have also collaborated with the provincial government in partnership agreements. For example, in 2002 the Quesnel Highlands Management Society signed a management agreement with the Cariboo Region of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (Resource Management Division), and Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (Environmental Stewardship Division), regarding snowmobile use in the Eastern Cariboo Region. In 2007 the Kokanee Country Snowmobile Club and Association of BC Snowmobile Clubs entered an MOU with the Ministry of Environment (Environmental Stewardship Division) regarding designated snowmobile areas in the Kootenay Lake Forest District portion of the South Purcell Mountains.

Appendix E contains a draft Stewardship Management Agreement that can be used as a template for agreements between snowmobile clubs and organizations and the Environmental Stewardship Division of the Ministry of Environment.

6.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Act - means an Act of the legislature, whether referred to as a statute, code, or by any other name.

Best Management Practices - are methods adopted by resource users designed to mitigate harm to the environment that might result from their activities.

Crown Land - is land owned by the Crown; also known as public land. Crown land may be held by either the federal or the provincial government.

Guidelines – are an indication or outline of policy or conduct.

Legislation - means laws enacted by the authority of the legislature.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – is a legal document describing a multi-sided agreement between parties. It expresses willingness between the parties to pursue a common line of action and an intent to work together. It is not a legal commitment.

Policy – is a plan of action to guide decisions and actions; the term may apply to government, private sector organizations and groups, and individuals.

Regulation – is a legal restriction put into action by government administrative agencies through rulemaking supported by a threat of sanction or a fine.

Statute - is an act of the legislature; in Canada an act of a provincial legislature or the federal parliament adopted pursuant to constitutional authority.

Wildlife Management Area - means land designated as a wildlife management area in order to apply scientific and technical principles to wildlife populations and habitats to maintain such populations essentially for recreational and/or scientific purposes..

The application of scientific and technical principles to wildlife populations and habitats to maintain such populations (particularly mammals, birds, and fish) essentially for recreational and (or) scientific purposes.

7.0 CONTACTS

BC Snowmobile Federation

Box 400, Houston BC V0J 1Z0

Tel 250-845-7715

1-877-537-8716

Email: office@bcsf.org

<http://www.bcsf.org/>

ABC Snowmobile Clubs

Box 48, Valemount BC V0E 2Z0

Email: info@abcsnow.ca

BC Commercial Snowmobile Operators Association

Box 9234, Revelstoke, BC V0E 3K0

Tel: (250)420-7576

Email: info@bccsoa.com

www.bccsoa.com

Ministry of Environment

Director, Regional Operations

Environmental Stewardship Division

Ministry of Environment

PO Box 9369 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria BC V8W 9M3

Tel: 250-356-0874

Fax: 250-356-9299

Ministry of Environment Regional Offices

Environmental Stewardship Division

Regional Managers:

Cranbrook (Kootenays)

205 Industrial Rd. G

Cranbrook, BC V1C 7G5

Tel: 250-489-8540

Fax: 250-489-8506

Prince George (Omineca)

4051 18th Ave

Prince George BC V2N 1B3

Tel: 250-565-6135

Fax: 250-565-6940

Fort St. John (Peace)

Room 400, 10003 — 110th Avenue

Fort St. John BC V1J 6M7

Tel: 250-787-3411

Fax: 250-787-3490

Kamloops (Thompson)

1259 Dalhousie Drive

Kamloops BC V2C 5Z5

Tel 250-371-6200

Fax: 250-828-4000

Williams Lake (Cariboo)

400 - 640 Borland Street

Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T1

Tel: 250-398-4530

Fax: 250-398-4214

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Manager, Backcountry Recreation

Mountain Caribou Recovery

Species at Risk Co-ordination Office

Integrated Land Management Bureau

145 - 3rd Ave., Kamloops, BC V2C 3M1

Tel: 250-377-2372

Fax: 250-377-7036

Ministry of Tourism, Sport & the Arts

Director, Tourism Division

Recreation, Sites & Trails Branch

5th Floor, 800 Johnson St

PO Box 9811, Victoria, BC V8W 9W1

Tel: 250-387-8382

8.0 RESOURCES

Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics:

http://www.bcsf.org/PDF_files/Code%20of%20Ethics%20Final.pdf

Conservation Data Centre: B.C. Ministry of Environment

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cdc/>

Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis: Fish and Wildlife Branch, B.C. Ministry of

Environment, www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/hunting/regulations/

Mountain Caribou: Species at Risk Coordination Office, Integrated Land Management Bureau,

<http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/sarco/mc/index.html>

Species and Ecosystems at Risk: Environmental Stewardship Division, B.C. Ministry of Environment,

www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/serisk.htm

Species at Risk Coordination Office: Integrated Land Management Bureau,

<http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/sarco/>

Species at Risk Act Public Registry: a searchable database of species,

www.sararegistry.gc.ca/species/default_e.cfm

Snowmobiling and Caribou in British Columbia: B.C. Ministry of Environment and B.C. Snowmobile Federation, a downloadable brochure:

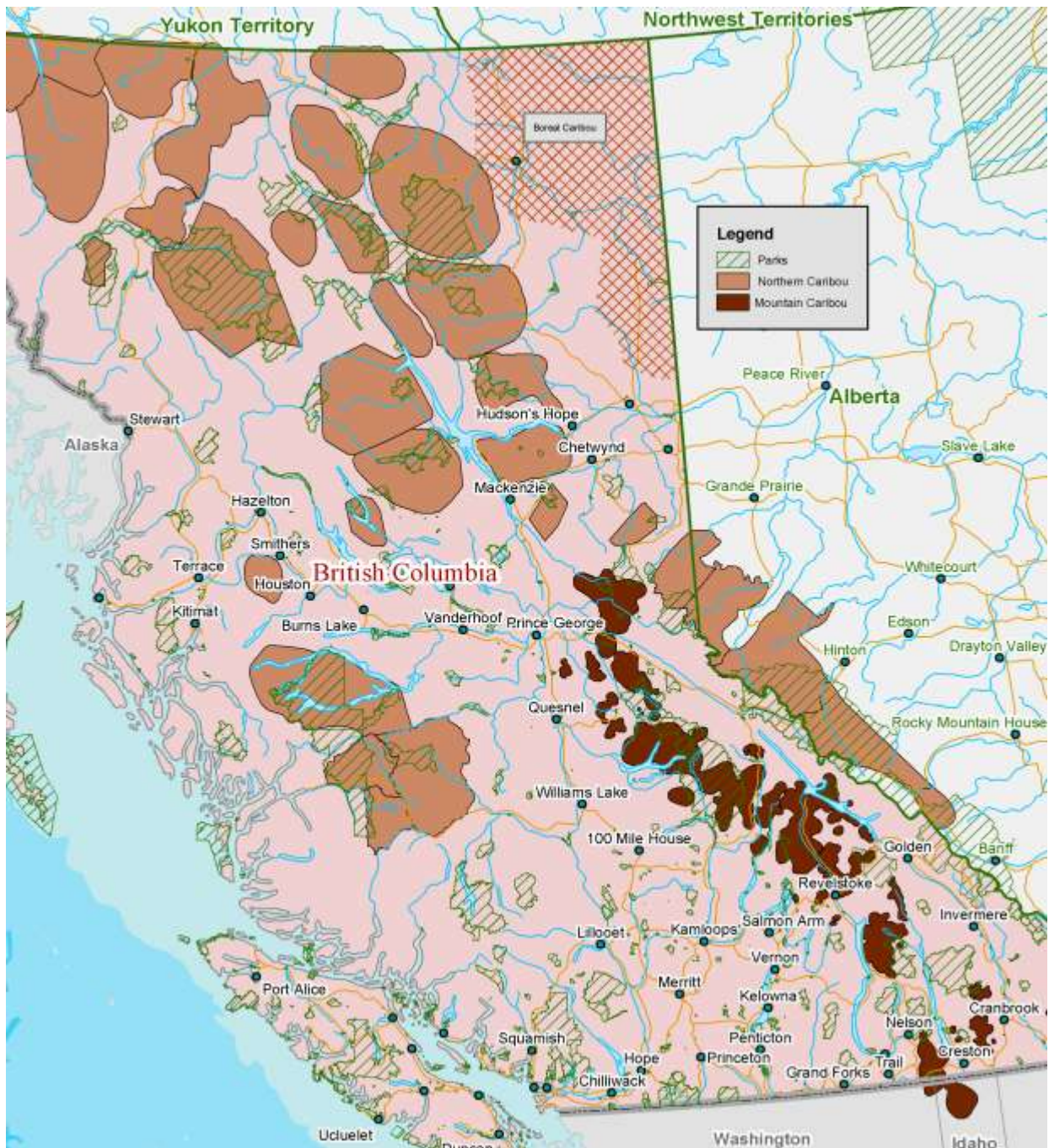
www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/twg/documents/snowmobile_caribou_brchr2006.pdf

Snowmobile Guide for the Columbia and Rocky Mountains of British Columbia: Integrated Land Management Bureau, B.C. Ministry of Environment, www.snowmobile.gov.bc.ca/

Wildlife Guidelines for Backcountry Tourism/Commercial Recreation in British Columbia. 2006.

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/twg/documents/wildlife_guidelines_recreation_may06_v2.pdf

APPENDIX A: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CARIBOU IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



APPENDIX B:

Snowmobile-Related Excerpts from the Wildlife Guidelines for Backcountry Tourism/Commercial Recreation in British Columbia

The full document is available at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/twg/index.html>.

Objective

The guidelines were developed to ensure that backcountry recreation activities are conducted in a manner that does not compromise the current distribution of wildlife, the sustainability of their populations, or the integrity of their habitats. These guidelines define results, desired behaviours, indicators, and limits for backcountry activities in relation to wildlife and their habitats.

Guidelines Development

A joint government and Commercial Tourism (CT) / Commercial Recreation (CR) sector committee (the Tourism Wildlife Project Team) was tasked with developing a set of guidelines that are results based, informed by science and operational experience, and that meet the legislative and policy needs of government and the sustainability objectives of both government and tourism. The guidelines were developed over an 18 month period in 2004 and 2005, with extensive input from representatives of commercial and public recreation sectors and organizations. These guidelines are intended for use by commercial tourism operators tenured under the *Land Act* when conducting activities on Crown land, including water-based activities. However, it is anticipated that the guidelines will provide useful guidance for all backcountry recreational users.

These guidelines replace the first version which was published in 2002 as the Interim wildlife guidelines for commercial backcountry recreation in British Columbia.

The development of the current guidelines was framed by a strategy (Wilson and Hamilton 2004 – Appendix 1) that:

- addressed concerns of stakeholders raised after the release of the Interim Guidelines;
- provided a context for the guidelines in relation to other legal and policy tools; and
- stressed a results-based approach based on precautionary defaults and/or the development of “alternative” operational strategies.

• • •

Activity

Motorized > Alpine/Tundra and Forest > Winter

- The following results, desired behaviours, indicators, and limits apply *in addition* to any relevant policies or regulations; for example, area-based closures and existing statutes.
- Concerns are ranked according to the *potential* risk to wildlife and their habitats, where “potential” is defined as the probability that the activity will result in either the alteration or destruction of habitat, or the temporary or permanent abandonment of habitat, in the absence of guidelines or statutes.
- Motorized vehicles intended or used for travel on snow include (but are not limited to) snowmobiles, snowcats, and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).
- Guidelines are summarized by:
 - **Results** - What the guidelines are attempting to achieve.
 - **Desired Behaviours** - Actions by users that are most likely to achieve the specified results.
 - **Indicators** - What should be measured to determine if the specified results are being achieved.
 - **Limits** - Acceptable bounds related to the measured indicator.
- Results and Desired Behaviours are identified for low-risk issues.
- Results, Desired Behaviours, Indicators, and Limits are identified for high-risk issues.
- **NOTE:** These guidelines have been produced as a means of ensuring that environmental values and tourism recreational activities can co-exist on the landscape. Tourism operators may find these guidelines useful and may choose to adopt them. However, if a licensee chooses to use a different strategy, and it is accepted, the licensee must undertake an effectiveness monitoring program. The Tenure Management Plan must reflect a commitment to the monitoring program, and opportunities to partner with government may be explored.
- **Safety remains the first priority under all circumstances.**

1. Degradation of Soil, Air and Water Quality

Concern: Air pollution

Results	Desired Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimize air pollution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use low-emission engines (e.g., 4-stroke or efficient 2-stroke).• Keep engines well tuned.• Avoid idling.

Concern: Water pollution

Results	Desired Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid water pollution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pack out all garbage.• Use existing facilities for human waste, pack it out, or bury it in holes 10 to 15 cm deep located at least 100 m from water sources (use group latrines at least 30 cm deep for parties of more than 4 persons).

Concern: Fuel spills

Results	Desired Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid fuel spills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe all refuelling regulations.• Carry fuel-spill kits for refuelling at remote caches.• Cache fuel at least 10 m from the high-water mark of water courses.

2. Integrity of Vegetation Communities

Concern: Soil Compaction

Results	Desired Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect vegetative cover and root systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use existing roads and trails in low snow conditions.

Concern: Damage to sensitive sites

Results	Desired Behaviours	Indicators	Limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect habitats of endangered wildlife species and ecosystems. • Protect sensitive ecosystems (grasslands, alpine/tundra, and moist-soil ecosystems such as riparian areas and wetlands). • Protect nesting/calving sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to identify endangered species and ecosystems within the operating area. • Operate in a manner that is consistent with government’s approved approach to recovery planning for species at risk. • Use existing roads and wide trails. • Obey all signs and area closures. • Do not break or trample vegetation in riparian areas. • Avoid known nesting/calving sites (seasonal closures might be necessary). • Do not damage wildlife trees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to sensitive sites. • Damage to vegetated alpine/tundra and grasslands beyond existing trail network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No vegetation damage in sensitive sites or vegetated alpine/tundra and grasslands beyond existing trails caused by motorized vehicles.

3. Direct Disturbance of Wildlife

Concerns: Physiological and behavioural disruption, displacement from preferred habitats; direct mortality, habituation/sensitization

Results	Desired Behaviours	Indicators	Limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize physiological and behavioural disruption. • Minimize changes in habitat use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record wildlife encounters, actions taken, and responses of animals. • Remain on established trails or in areas of high visibility where no wildlife are present. • Obey all signs and area closures. • Do not harass wildlife. • Do not feed wildlife. • Do not handle wildlife. • Do not allow dogs to be at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of encounters resulting in an alarm response. • Population abundance and distribution trends of wildlife species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No increase in rate of alarm responses over time caused by motorized activities. • No harassment caused by motorized activities. • No abandonment of habitats caused by motorized activities.

	<p>large and harass wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pack out all garbage. • Turn off engine, remain on machine, and yield to wildlife on trails and roads. • Focus activities in areas where wildlife are least likely to be disturbed (seasonal closures might be necessary). • Stay at distances sufficient to prevent changes to the behaviour of animals (at least 500 m in open areas is the default for large mammals). 		
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4. Integrity of Fisheries Resources

Concern: Damage to fish populations and habitat

Results	Desired Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect fish populations and habitat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not move live fish or other aquatic life. • Do not harm spawning or rearing habitats by crossing or otherwise disturbing open water areas. • Obey all fisheries regulations. • Follow desired behaviours related to water quality.

5. Special Management

Concern: Grizzly Bear and Wolverine dens

Results	Desired Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect den sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain at distances sufficient to avoid disturbing Grizzly Bears and Wolverines in known den sites (at least 500 m is the default).

Concern: Ungulate winter range

Results	Desired Behaviours	Indicators	Limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize physiological or behavioural disruption of ungulates on winter ranges. • Continued occupation of ungulate winter ranges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain on established roads and trails. • In deep snow areas, where snow-plowing creates linear “traps” for Moose, provide lateral escape routes at relatively frequent intervals. • Obey all signs and area closures. • Do not harass wildlife. • Do not feed wildlife. • Do not allow dogs to be at large and harass wildlife. • Minimize activity in and near identified ungulate winter ranges (seasonal closures might be necessary). • Stay at distances sufficient to prevent changes to the behaviour of animals (at least 500 m in open areas is the default). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued occupancy of ungulate winter ranges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No harassment caused by motorized activities. • No abandonment of ungulate winter ranges caused by motorized activities.

Concern: Mountain Caribou

Results	Desired Behaviours	Indicators	Limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize physiological or behavioural disruption of Mountain Caribou. • Continued occupation of existing range by Mountain Caribou. • Ensure that motorized activities are not a barrier to Mountain Caribou population recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record wildlife encounters, actions taken, and responses of animals. • Remain on established roads and trails. • Obey all signs and area closures. • Do not harass wildlife. • Do not feed wildlife. • Do not allow dogs to be at large and harass wildlife. • Minimize activity in and near identified high-use areas (seasonal closures might be necessary). • Stay at distances sufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encounter frequency. • Proportion of encounters resulting in an alarm response. • Population abundance and distribution trends of subpopulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No increase in rate of alarm responses over time caused by motorized activities. • No harassment caused by motorized activities. • No abandonment of current range caused by motorized activities.

	<p>to prevent changes to the behaviour of animals (at least 500 m in open areas is the default for large mammals).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow recommendations of Recovery Implementation Groups for Mountain Caribou. 		
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Definitions

Alarm response is defined as an immediate movement by animals in reaction to an external stimulus, usually to safer locations.

Harass includes worry, exhaust, fatigue, annoy, plague, pester, tease or torment, but does not include the lawful hunting, trapping or capturing of wildlife (from the *BC Wildlife Act*).

Sensitive sites include habitats of rare and endangered wildlife species, nesting and other breeding sites, rare plant communities and ecosystems that are easily damaged and/or slow to recover from disturbances, including alpine meadows, grasslands and moist-soil ecosystems such as riparian areas and wetlands.

Ungulates are hoofed animals. Wildlife species include deer, elk, moose, caribou, sheep and goats.

Management Plan refers to a CR management plan. It includes draft management plans and final management plans and means a combination of text and maps that are components of a legal agreement between ILMB (for land tenure; MOE for water tenures) and the tenure holder. It consists of descriptions of the specific nature of the CR operation, including the boundaries, within which the operation may occur, and the conditions, provisions, restrictions and guidelines for use of Crown land for such an operation.

Tenure document is the formal approval to occupy and use Crown land for a specified purpose.
www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/resorts_rec/tenure/commercialrecreation/index.htm.

Qualified professional - Registered Forest Professional, Registered Professional Biologist, and Registered Professional Agrologist.

Blue list is a list of ecological communities, and indigenous species and subspecies of special concern (formerly vulnerable) in British Columbia.

Red list is a list of ecological communities, and indigenous species and subspecies that are extirpated, endangered or threatened in British Columbia. Red listed species and subspecies have, or are candidates for, official Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened Status in B.C. Not all Red-listed taxa will necessarily become formally designated. Placing taxa on these lists flags them as being at risk and requiring investigation.

Yellow list is a list of ecological communities and indigenous species which are not at risk in British Columbia.

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What are the Sensitive Species and Habitats in My Area?

Several resources are available to help you determine what sensitive species and habitats exist in your operating area:

1. Contact your local Ministry of Environment office for specific questions regarding species at risk and other concerns in your area (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/main/prgs/regions/htm>).
2. Check the list and mapped boundaries of approved ungulate winter ranges (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/uwr/index.htm>).
3. Check the list and mapped boundaries of Wildlife Habitat Areas (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/identified/index.html>).
4. Browse the interactive map of fisheries resources information (<http://www.fishwizard.com>).
5. Browse the interactive map of known sensitive species and plant community occurrences (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/ims.htm>).
6. Obtain a list of animals, plants, and plant communities at risk for your Forest Region/District using the B.C. Species and Ecosystem Explorer (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/toolintro/html>).

Species are classified as either Red-, Blue- or Yellow-listed (see ***Definitions***) and some are considered Identified Wildlife (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/identified/htm>). Links to reports that provide information on their biology are included in query results.

7. Check available Sensitive Ecosystems Inventories (SEI) of rare and fragile ecosystems in your area (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/sei>).
8. Check for species-at-risk recovery planning processes that might be occurring in your area (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/recoveryplans/rcvry1.htm>).
9. Review relevant land use plans for your area (<http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/ilmb/index.html>).

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. WHY were the Guidelines developed?

The guidelines were developed to ensure that recreation activities in the backcountry are conducted in a manner that does not compromise the current distribution of wildlife, the sustainability of their populations, or the integrity of their habitats. These guidelines define results, desired behaviours, indicators, and limits for backcountry activities in relation to wildlife and their habitats.

2. HOW were the Guidelines developed?

A joint government and Commercial Tourism (CT) / Commercial Recreation (CR) sector committee (the Tourism Wildlife Project Team) was tasked with developing a set of guidelines that are results based, informed by science and operational experience, and that meet the legislative and policy needs of government and the sustainability objectives of both government and tourism. Guidelines were developed over an 18-month period in 2004 and 2005, with extensive input from representatives of commercial and public recreation sectors and organizations, and endeavour to:

- address concerns of stakeholders raised after the release of the *Interim Guidelines*;
- provide a context for the guidelines in relation to other legal and policy tools;
- stress a results-based approach based on precautionary defaults and the development of “alternative” operational strategies

3. Are there other Guidelines for these activities?

These guidelines replace the first iteration, which was published in 2002 as the *Interim wildlife guidelines for commercial backcountry recreation in British Columbia*.

4. Who is supposed to use the guidelines?

These guidelines are intended for use by commercial tourism operators tenured under the *Land Act* when conducting activities on Crown land, including water-based activities. However, it is anticipated that the guidelines will provide useful guidance for **all** backcountry recreational users.

5. Will the Guidelines affect existing Management Plans?

No. The guidelines will not affect approved management plans. However, when the Management Plan (MP) or tenure requires a review, replacement or an amendment (i.e. due to changes in an operation) the CR manager will assess whether wildlife values are adequately addressed in the MP and whether modifications to the MP are necessary to ensure consistency with the revised guidelines.

6. How will compliance be determined?

Compliance will be assessed against the “desired behaviours” or the measures provided in any alternate strategy that is used.

While “Indicators” show what should be measured to determine if “results” are being achieved they may not be appropriate for determining an operator’s level of compliance as there may be factors other than the tenure holder’s actions that are affecting the results.

7. What are the repercussions if I don’t follow the Guidelines?

Once relevant portions of the guidelines are translated into specific commitments in management plans, they become contractual (legal) obligations.

If an operator is acting in a way that is inconsistent with the guidelines contained in a MP they will be required to bring their operation into compliance by modifying their practices or possibly amending their management plans. If there is continued non-compliance or there are serious consequences associated with the non-compliance, it may be necessary to carry out enforcement actions (refer to Ministry of Agriculture and Lands Land Use Policy: “Fostering Compliance and Enforcement of Compliance”).

8. When am I required to adopt the new Guidelines?

The new guidelines should be employed whenever a new tenure is applied for, or whenever an existing one is renewed, or in some cases, modified.

9. What is an alternative strategy to the Guidelines?

If you propose to act in a manner that is different from the desired behaviours in the Guidelines, you must provide an alternative strategy which includes:

- a suite of behaviours designed to achieve the same result; and
- a monitoring and adaptive plan to ensure results are being met.

This alternative strategy must be approved by the statutory decision maker that issues the tenure.

10. If I choose to propose an alternative behaviour to one stated in the Guidelines, what is the mechanism for approval?

Any alternative strategy must achieve, as a minimum, the same results and would need to be approved by the statutory decision maker responsible for plan approval. For more information on application and approval processes, see the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA) site for Adventure Tourism / Commercial Recreation.

11. How/when are we expected to use qualified professionals, particularly in the context of alternative measures to Guidelines?

When you propose an alternative strategy to the Guidelines, you must have it signed by a qualified professional. This is defined as a competent professional who is a member of a certifying body which has

standards of practice and can hold that member accountable. For example, this includes Registered Professional Biologists, Registered Forest Professionals, Registered Professional Agrologists and Registered Professional Engineers and Geoscientists.

12. How will CR managers use these?

Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts (MTSA) staff expect that the Guidelines will form the foundation for addressing wildlife and habitat issues in management plans before a tenure is issued. The Guidelines list the results that need to be achieved to address wildlife values in a management plan. They also list desired behaviours that should achieve those results. However, the Guidelines allow for alternative strategies to achieve those results.

13. What if the Guidelines change?

Government has committed to keeping the Guidelines up-to-date. As we learn more about their effectiveness or practicality of implementation (partly through on-going partnership with operators), the Guidelines will be revised and improved. **Note:** The onus will be on operators to keep up-to-date on changes in the Guidelines as they affect their operation.

14. What happens when the Guidelines are contrary to the safety of my guests?

Safety is always a priority, but operators should not intentionally put themselves in a situation where they have to choose between compliance and safety. The tenure issuing authority should be notified in this event.

15. What about public users?

The Guidelines are designed to apply to those who hold commercial recreation tenures under the *Land Act*. Because these desired behaviours are thought to be the best way to address wildlife and habitat issues, public groups and individuals will be encouraged to act in a manner that is consistent with them. It is always expected that the public will comply with statutes and regulations (such as the Fisheries, Water, Wildlife and Environmental Management Acts) which are reflected in the Guidelines.

16. What about facility development?

The Guidelines do not cover the development of facilities. While the requirements/standards for those will be covered in each management plan, there is a wide range of sources of information and standards available for items such as trails.

17. I am an operator who is following the Guidelines, but I have public recreationists in my tenure area who aren't. As a result, the desired results are not being achieved. What are the repercussions for me?

The Guidelines are designed to focus on achieving results in relation to the operator's activities. In a situation like this, the focus will be on ensuring that the operator is following the desired behaviours. The tenure issuing authority should be notified of these concerns. A public information campaign may be needed.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
REGARDING MANAGEMENT OF
SNOWMOBILING
IN MOUNTAIN CARIBOU HABITATS**

BETWEEN:

*the Ministries of
Agriculture and Lands,
Environment,
and Tourism, Sport and the Arts*

AND:

**British Columbia Snowmobile Federation
(BCSF)**

(collectively referred to as the “Parties”)

WHEREAS the Species at Risk Recovery Coordination Office (SaRCO) of the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB) is responsible for developing a structured program for, and a set of recommendations to, the provincial government on the recovery of three wide-ranging species at risk (Mountain Caribou, Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet);

AND WHEREAS the management and, where necessary, recovery, of all three ecotypes of Woodland Caribou in British Columbia (Mountain, Northern and Boreal)², are of concern to the Ministry of Environment;

AND WHEREAS SaRCO is focused in its activities on the Mountain Caribou ecotype;

AND WHEREAS the Parties agree on the need to recover Mountain Caribou, listed as Threatened on the Public Registry for the federal *Species at Risk Act* and listed as a Category of Species at Risk under the B.C. *Forests and Range Practices Act*;

AND WHEREAS the Parties agree that there is a range of biophysical, climatic and human factors that may affect recovery of Mountain Caribou in B.C.;

² In this MOU, the term “caribou” refers to all ecotypes of Woodland Caribou found in B.C., including Mountain, Northern, and Boreal.

AND WHEREAS the Parties agree that there are many human activities that may affect the survival and recovery of Mountain Caribou, of which snowmobiling in Mountain Caribou habitat is one;

AND WHEREAS the Parties agree on the need to improve the understanding of all threats to caribou, including any actual effects snowmobiling and other motorized recreational activities may have;

AND WHEREAS one of the mandates of the BCSF is to set standards for environmental stewardship for the snowmobiling sector and that wildlife issues are one of a number of areas addressed in the attached “Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics” (Appendix A);

AND WHEREAS the Parties recognize that the BCSF and individual snowmobilers have developed, and continue to develop operating practices for snowmobiling in caribou habitat (Appendix B) and that these practices have improved significantly in response to Mountain Caribou conservation concerns;

AND WHEREAS the Parties agree on the need to develop some consistency in the way in which issues related to snowmobiling and Mountain Caribou recovery are resolved in B.C.;

AND WHEREAS the Parties agree that before implementing access restrictions for snowmobiling, all human activities occurring in or around Mountain Caribou habitat that pose a potential threat to Mountain Caribou survival and recovery, not just snowmobiling, shall be considered.

THEREFORE the Parties agree to enter this Memorandum of Understanding as follows:

1. Principles

Activities undertaken in the context of this Memorandum of Understanding will be based on the following principles:

- **Consistency with Mountain Caribou recovery objectives** – Any actions or initiatives undertaken need to be consistent with relevant objectives set for Mountain Caribou recovery at the provincial level through the work of SaRCO, the Ministry of Environment (MoE), and the Ministry of Tourism, Sport, and the Arts (MoTSA).
- **The role of science** – To the greatest extent practicable, proposed management activities will be driven by the best available science³ relevant to this sector. Where science is available, it will be immediately applied to the operational approaches taken by the sector, including information shared.

³ Best available science means finding the “soundest” scientific information that is available and accessible — in terms of time, location, cost, degree of review and scientific content. Best available scientific information includes scientific and technical information, scientifically collected monitoring information, and experiential knowledge (which will be elicited through de-biasing techniques such as multiple peer reviews and other methods).

As informed by the United States–based Institute for Regulatory Science, determining the best available scientific information rests on three criteria:

- the status of science (i.e., proven or evolving as opposed to fallacious);
- its selection process (i.e., peer-reviewed literature, gray literature or expert opinion, as opposed to personal opinion);

- **Information sharing** – Between the parties will allow for the application of the best science available to the specific realities of this sector and facilitate the development of the most effective management recommendations possible. Recovery options or recovery action plans must consider historical information supplied by local users, and local stakeholders, before options or plans are finalized.
- **Prioritization** – Because of the need to pursue immediate measures while recovery options are being developed, it is agreed that the Parties will address priority issues in priority geographic areas, based on advice from knowledgeable individuals working within the SaRCO, MoE, MoTSA and the BCSF.
- **Adaptive management** – Activities will, without putting Mountain Caribou at risk, be considered as learning experiences that will allow for continued improvement of operational practices.
- **The role of local processes** – It is also recognized that in some parts of the province, existing local processes (such as land use plans, tenure review committees, etc.) should, where appropriate and consistent with the current provincial recovery process, continue to play a key role in ensuring that the operational practices (Appendix B) are implemented, monitored and improved on a regular basis.
- **Ecosystem approach** – While the focus of this Memorandum of Understanding is on Mountain Caribou, the Parties recognize the need to take an ecosystem approach. This means that activities and practices will be conducted in a manner that recognizes and addresses the need to maintain the integrity of ecosystem processes, functions and native species.
- **Snowmobile Closures** – All significant recreational activities will be examined for potential adverse effects prior to the closure of areas to snowmobiling. Best available science and evidence of adverse effects will inform decisions about access restrictions. The BCSF will be consulted prior to making changes to existing snowmobile closures or establishing new snowmobile closures. Areas of Crown land that offer equal snowmobiling values and that have no potential adverse effects on Mountain Caribou, will be sought as alternate areas for snowmobiling.
- **Meetings** – Meetings regarding recovery planning must consider availability of snowmobile representatives, scheduling meetings during evenings and weekends whenever desired and possible.

2. Operating Practices

It is recognized that individuals and clubs may need to enhance or modify these operating practices (Appendix B) in specific areas where, through collaborative efforts with SaRCO, MoE, MoTSA and the BCFS, a memorandum of understanding is reached that such enhancements or modifications are necessary. It is also recognized that differences between these practices and those currently being used by snowmobilers under government-approved management plans will be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with implementation of the Tourism-Wildlife Guidelines.

-
- the degree to which the objectives of the science are scientific (as opposed to ideological or belief-based).

3. Research and Adaptive Management Trials

The Parties agree to work together to develop, pursue funding for, and implement specific research projects and adaptive management trials which will address questions related to the potential effects of snowmobile activities on Mountain Caribou and their habitats.

Further, BCSF agrees to support – through expert consultation and information sharing – the provincial Mountain Caribou recovery process currently underway and coordinated by SaRCO.

4. Monitoring and Inventory

The Parties agree to work together, along with other partners in government, industry and conservation groups, to develop monitoring and inventory protocols and projects that will:

- monitor the effectiveness of, and compliance with, operating practices in Appendix B; and
- continue to build an understanding of the distribution, population sizes and nature of habitat use by Mountain Caribou, and caribou-human interactions.

Information gathered by snowmobilers, according to established protocols and/or associated with monitoring and inventory projects, shall not be interpreted as harassment of caribou.

5. Stewardship Outreach

The Parties agree to work together to devise ways to promote voluntary compliance and foster stewardship behaviour within the entire snowmobiling sector (BCSF members, Association of BC Snowmobilers, other snowmobilers, dealers, retailers, manufacturers). The Parties will jointly develop a list of ideas, a plan or strategy for the outreach activities and materials required to reach this sector. The Parties will work together to obtain resources to implement the plan over the next five years, jointly gathering information about the sector to inform outreach efforts so that they are effective, efficient and client-sensitive. The Parties will collaborate in preparing outreach materials, including brochures, maps, displays, audio-visual productions, websites, etc., and presenting information to BCSF members and other snowmobilers through train the trainer sessions, workshops, meetings, mail-outs, special events, trade shows, and other forms of communications. The goal of these outreach efforts will be to:

- promote voluntary compliance with regulatory requirements (e.g. respect for closures under the *Wildlife Act*); and
- foster stewardship behaviour as outlined in the *Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics* (Appendix A); *Operating Practices for Snowmobiling in Caribou Habitat* (Appendix B); the *Wildlife Guidelines for Backcountry Tourism/Commercial Recreation* relevant to caribou (<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/twg/>); protocols or guidelines developed for reporting sightings of caribou and other wildlife, as well as for monitoring and inventory projects, and guidance provided by any recovery plans for caribou.

In addition, the Parties agree to promote this Memorandum of Understanding through their websites, as well as other opportunities.

6. Dispute Resolution

The Parties agree to resolve disputes related to this Memorandum of Understanding, or related to activities or projects undertaken through this Memorandum of Understanding through the SaRCO Coordinator, Director of the Ecosystems Branch of MoE, and the Chair, BCSF Environmental Standards Committee. Only where disputes cannot be resolved at those levels will resolution be pursued at higher levels in each organization.

7. Term, Extension, Modification or Termination

The Parties agree that the term of this Memorandum of Understanding will be for five years from the date of signing. Discussions about continuation or cancellation can occur at the request of either party, but both parties must agree to continuation or cancellation. Any extension or modification of this Memorandum of Understanding will be by mutual agreement between the Ministry Directors (or designates) and the President and General Manager of the BC Snowmobile Federation, subject to operational requirements. Sixty days written notice is required for extension, modification or termination.

8. Legality: This document does not create legally enforceable conditions. It is an expression of the shared intent of the Parties on how to do business together.

Original signed by:

Hon. Pat Bell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

Hon. Stan Hagen
Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts

Hon. Barry Penner
Minister of Environment

Roger Frost
President, BC Snowmobile Federation

Les Auston
General Manager, BC Snowmobile Federation

Appendix A (to Appendix C)

Canadian Snowmobiler Code of Ethics

I understand and accept the risks associated with snowmobiling and I will take responsibility for my own actions.

As a responsible snowmobiler

- I will ride in a manner that is a credit to our recreation.
- I will influence other snowmobilers to adhere to this Code of Ethics.
- I will respect the rights of others including property owners and other outdoor enthusiasts.
- I will protect and preserve our natural environment.
- I will ride in a responsible manner and use only trails; areas or roads open to snowmobiles.
- I will not harass or harm wildlife or the natural surroundings.
- I will minimize my impact on the environment.
- I will ride smart, be prepared and stay in control.
- I will check ice and weather conditions before riding.
- I will help those in distress.
- I will obey all laws and rules governing our recreation.
- I will promote proper snowmobile education and training.
- I will practice Zero Tolerance with respect to impaired riding.

Appendix B (to Appendix C)

Operating Practices for Snowmobiling⁴ in Caribou Habitats

A.) Objectives

The objectives of these practices are to ensure:

- i. that snowmobiling activities that overlap with caribou habitats do not result in displacement⁵ of caribou from their preferred winter habitats;
- ii. consistency in approach by BCSF member clubs and their members operating in caribou habitat; and
- iii. consistency in approach by government agencies in managing and administering the activities of BCSF members.

B.) Training

⁴ Includes Mountain, Northern, and Boreal Caribou ecotypes.

⁵ For the purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding, displacement is defined as the temporary or permanent abandonment of suitable and occupied caribou habitat caused by the activities of the operator.

The BCSF, with support from MoE and ILMB, will promote and make available to its members training about caribou (habitats, habitat use, and practices to address same). The objective is for members to take at least one module prior to riding in or near caribou habitat.

The training will review:

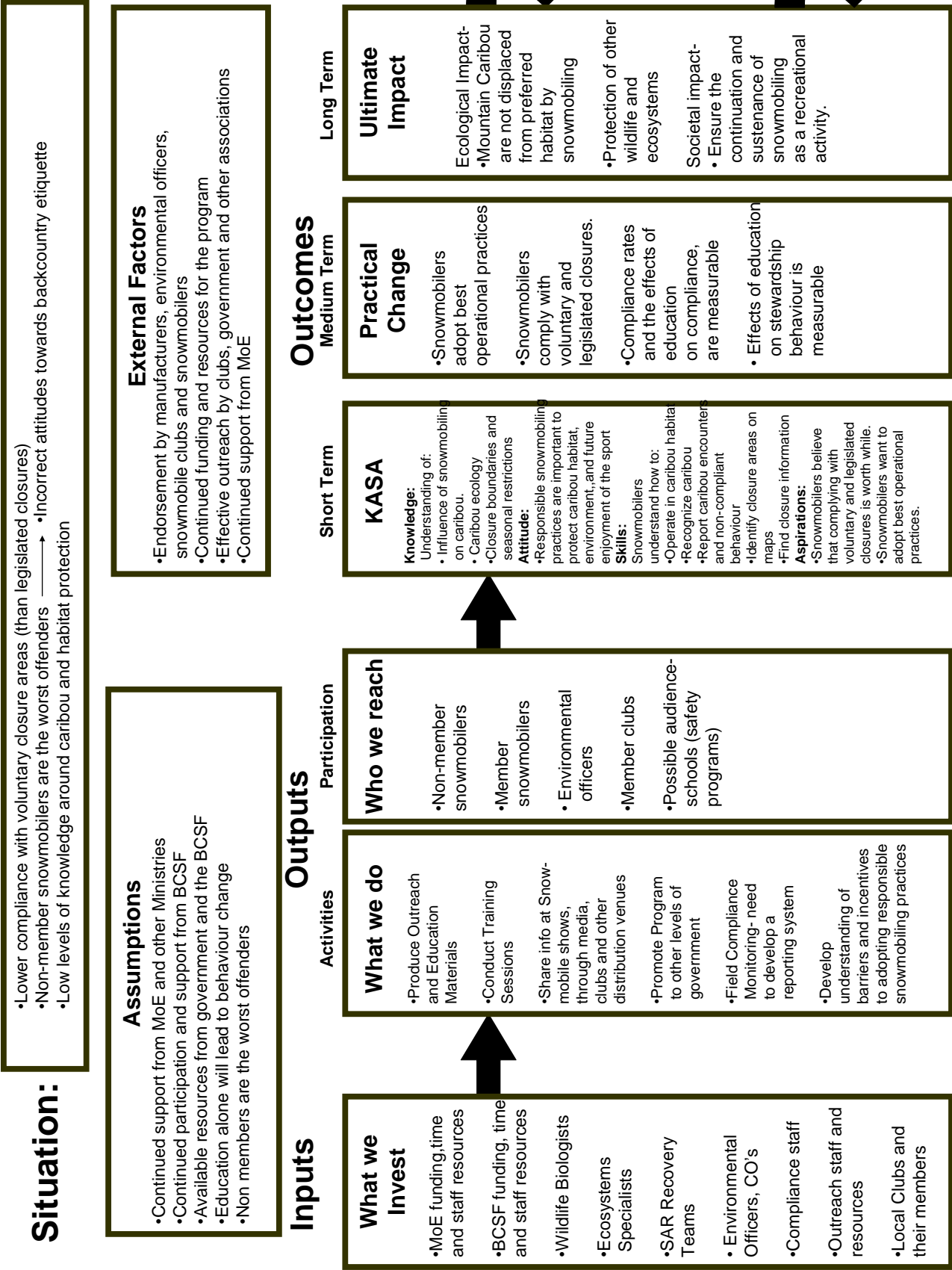
- i. relevant aspects of caribou biology, including general life history characteristics and habitat use;
- ii. an up-date on current recovery actions;
- iii. scientific and management literature related to the effects of snowmobiling on the behaviour of caribou and other wild ungulates;
- iv. riding procedures and practices, including:
 - a. refraining from riding in areas closed to snowmobiling
 - b. minimizing the probability of encountering caribou;
 - c. actions taken when caribou or other wildlife are encountered;
- v. reporting procedures when caribou are encountered.

C.) Operational Practices in Caribou Habitat

- Snowmobilers will make every effort to research an area prior to snowmobiling there, including looking for local maps and other information pertinent to snowmobiling in that location.
- Snowmobilers will not ride in areas designated as closed to snowmobiling.
- Snowmobilers will obey all posted signs.
- If caribou are encountered, snowmobilers will refrain from approaching. Snowmobilers will stay on their snowmobiles. Photographs will be taken from a distance.
- If caribou are encountered on a road or trail, snowmobilers will turn off the engine and remain on their sled. Snowmobilers will wait until the caribou have moved off of the road or trail before continuing, making every effort to stay as far away from the caribou as safely possible.
- If caribou are encountered in a play area, snowmobilers will not approach them. They will shut down their machines to give animals a chance to move away, then leave the area and refrain from riding within sight of the caribou.
- If caribou tracks are observed, snowmobilers will not follow the tracks.
- Snowmobilers will ride only where the snow is greater than 30 cm deep.

APPENDIX D: BCSF SNOWMOBILER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH LOGIC MODEL

Logic Model of: BCSF Snowmobilers Education and Outreach Program



APPENDIX E: DRAFT STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

[To be modified by agreement as necessary]

STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT REGARDING MANAGEMENT OF SNOWMOBILING IN MOUNTAIN CARIBOU HABITATS IN THE [insert locality] AREA

BETWEEN:

**The Ministry of Environment (MoE),
Environmental Stewardship Division,**

AND:

[insert name of club, assoc., etc.]

(Collectively referred to as the “Parties”)

Preamble

A “**Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Management of Snowmobiling in Mountain Caribou Habitat**” was signed by the Ministries of Agriculture and Lands (MAL), Environment (MoE), and Tourism, Sport, and the Arts (MoTSA) and the [insert either British Columbia Snowmobile Federation (BCSF) or the Association of BC Snowmobile Clubs (ABCSC) or both, if clubs from both are engaged in SMA discussions] (hereby referred to as the Provincial MOU). The Provincial MOU includes the principles, operating practices, research and adaptive management trials, monitoring and inventory, and stewardship outreach protocols applicable to all members of the BCSF (or ABCSC).

This Stewardship Management Agreement (SMA) describes the specific shared stewardship roles and responsibilities of the Parties for snowmobile closures in the [geographic] area. This includes both the voluntary snowmobile closure(s) listed in [insert appendix, as appropriate] (hereby referred to as the “Agreement Closure(s)”) as well as closures subject to [insert details of legislative tools used to enact closures, eg. *Schedule 7 of the Motor Vehicle Prohibition Regulation* under the *Wildlife Act*, as may be amended from time to time (hereby referred to as the “Legislated Closures”)].

Principles

Any actions or initiatives undertaken under this SMA need to be consistent with the Provincial MOU as may be amended from time to time. The SMA is a local agreement based on common interests in the [geographic]

area. As such, interactions between the Parties should be at the local level and based on respect for everyone's interests, values, and mandates.

Applicability

This SMA replaces the “any previous agreements” – [reference them] including its associated maps dated and signed [insert date, if applicable];

This SMA describes the Agreement Closure boundaries for the areas listed in Appendix [insert appendix reference] near [geographic location];

This SMA describes the shared stewardship roles and responsibilities of the Parties related to both the Agreement Closure(s) and the Legislated Closures. With regards to the Legislated Closures, the terms of this SMA are limited to those Legislated Closures that are in effect within the [ministry administrative unit – region, district, etc.].

Shared Stewardship Roles and Responsibilities

Agreement Closure(s) - Boundary Marking - The [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] will be responsible for marking (where practical) and maintaining (when possible) the boundaries of the Agreement Closure(s) listed in Appendix A including any associated maps that are subject to this SMA, to the extent that encroachments into the closure(s) are, for the most part, a result of the individual snowmobile operator's decision and not a result of a lack of adequate information. For the sake of consistency, the [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] will use sign formats that are agreed upon with the MoE. Signs shall be supplied by the MoE when possible. Maintenance includes ensuring that signs are readily visible to the public.

Legislated Closures - Boundary Marking - The MoE will be responsible for marking (where practical) and maintaining (when possible) the boundaries of both the open and closed areas subject to the Legislated Closures, including legal access trails, to the extent that encroachments into closed areas are, for the most part, a result of the individual snowmobile operator's decision and not a result of a lack of adequate information. Maintenance includes ensuring that signs are readily visible to the public.

Cooperation Between Parties – Each Party, where possible, shall assist the other Parties in achieving their boundary/trail marking and sign maintenance responsibilities. However, no Party shall erect, replace, nor alter any boundary or trail signs within any other Party's area of responsibility without the written consent of the responsible Party. Each Party will promptly notify the other Party in writing should boundary marking problems be discovered. All Parties are encouraged to conduct sign maintenance, regardless of whether or not the sign pertains to their areas(s) of responsibility. The intent is to ensure that users are well informed.

Each Party shall provide the other Parties with up to date coordinates (as agreed upon) of all installed boundary and trail signs including the type of sign and its direction of view. This information is to be kept confidential between the Parties.

Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement - The [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] will be the lead Party responsible for monitoring compliance within the areas subject to the Agreement Closure(s) listed in Appendix A. The MoE will be the lead Party responsible for monitoring compliance and conducting enforcement within all areas subject to Legislated Closures. However, where practical and possible and without compromising legal enforcement capabilities, the Parties shall endeavor to conduct joint monitoring and enforcement. Each Party is encouraged to conduct compliance monitoring within each others areas of responsibility.

The [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] Snow Patrol program is a valuable tool for monitoring compliance and providing the public with information related to the closures. The [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] Snow Patrol program is encouraged to regularly have presence at the Agreement Closure(s) as well as at the Legislated Closures on a rotational basis, subject to availability of its volunteer members. If legal infractions are witnessed by the [insert name of club, assoc., etc.] Snow Patrol, they are encouraged to report the incident to the Conservation Officer Service (COS). Information that needs to be provided includes the date and time of the incident, the location of the incident (GPS coordinates are preferred), and descriptions of the snowmobile operator and their snowmobile or vehicle including any readily visible registration information. This information is to only be collected when it can be accomplished without entering any of the closure areas.

Monitoring results shall be made available to each Party upon written request from the other Party. Monitoring results shall be recorded and reported using the monitoring form found in Appendix C. Where possible, non-compliance track locations and locations of witnessed infractions shall be recorded with a GPS and reported. If monitoring reports are to be developed, the reports are to include the results of each Party's monitoring efforts provided that data accuracy is sufficient. Information shall be used to examine effectiveness of signage and educational materials. The goal shall be to work towards improving compliance.

Provision of Information to the Public – The MoE will be the Party responsible for the development of digital base maps (as agreed to by the Parties) for the purposes of providing information to the public that accurately show both the Agreement Closure(s) and the Legislated Closures as may be amended from time to time (collectively referred to as the “Closure Information Maps”).

The MoE will provide the [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] with digital Closure Information Maps such that they can use them for information purposes, including the development of brochures and web based information. The [insert name of club, assoc., etc.] will be responsible to ensure that any information they provide to the public or clients accurately reflects both the Agreement Closure(s) and the Legislated Closures. The MoE will be responsible to update the Closure Information Maps should amendments be made to either the SMA Map(s) or the Legislated Closure maps.

The MoE will provide the closure information signs listed in Appendix B. Trail head signs are to be installed at the locations shown on the Closure Information Maps and shall be taken down after April 15th each year, stored, and re-installed each season prior to December 15th, all by the [insert name of club, assoc. etc.]. All trail head signs are to be maintained by the [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] to ensure they are easily visible

to the public. Maintenance includes clearing obstructions and re-installing the signs if removed, but does not include replacement.

Trail Grooming – No Party is to conduct or facilitate mechanized grooming of access trails in the vicinity of any of the Legislated Closures or the Agreement Closure(s) unless specifically described in Appendix A.

Assistance in Obtaining Funding

The MoE shall assist the [insert name of club, assoc. etc.] in finding funding from various sources in order to support this SMA.

Dispute Resolution

Where a dispute arises related to this SMA, or related to activities or projects undertaken within the scope of this SMA, dispute resolution will be based on sincere attempts to listen to, and understand the position and interests of the other Parties. The Parties will begin by attempting to resolve those issues locally by themselves; including, but not limited to:

- designating one spokesperson per signatory group to convey matters of concern and items of agreement; and
- describing their respective positions on any matters of concern in writing in a timeframe that allows for issue resolution.

Resolution will be elevated within each party before it adversely affects working relationships at the local level. Within the Environmental Stewardship Division (ESD) of the MoE, disputes will be elevated from the local level to the Ecosystems Section Head, the Regional Manager and the Director of Regional Operations, in that order.

If the Parties are unable to resolve a dispute themselves, the Parties will then apply the following dispute resolution process:

1. The Director of Regional Operations from the ESD of the MoE, or his or her nominee, will work with the president of the [insert name of club, assoc. etc.], or their nominees, to jointly select a mediator.
2. The mediator will be asked to facilitate a process for working through the issues in dispute and seeking a resolution acceptable to all Parties.
3. Any recommendations made by the mediator are non-binding unless the Parties specify, in advance, that they are to be binding.
4. The costs of a mediator appointed under this provision will be shared equally by the Parties.

Term

The Parties agree that the term of this agreement is unlimited. However, any Party may request the SMA be opened for review by submitting a letter of request to the other Parties.

Signatories:

Date: _____

President

[insert name of club, assoc. etc.]

Date: _____

Regional Manager

Environmental Stewardship Division

Ministry of Environment, <insert> Region

Appendix A – Agreement Closure(s)

1. – The area on <describe area> is subject to Agreement Closure(s) as shown on the attached map titled “XXXXXX Agreement Snowmobile Closure(s)” dated XXXX XX, 20__ (hereby referred to as the “XXXXXX SMA Map”). Specifically, snowmobiling within <describe area> on the XXXXXX SMA Map is not permitted between <date> and <date> (inclusive) each year. Mechanized grooming is permitted <describe area> as shown on the XXXXXX SMA Map. Mechanized grooming beyond this point is not permitted.

Appendix B – Responsibility for Closure Information Signs

Sign and sign standards will be matters of negotiation between the snowmobile club and MoE as per the agreement.

Appendix C – Monitoring Form

To be jointly developed between the Parties and agreed upon no later than [insert date agreed upon].

APPENDIX F: LAND USE SIGNS IMPORTANT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

These signs are excerpted from
Standards for Snowmobile Trail Signing and Placement in British Columbia 2007



Wildlife Closure Snowmobiles Not Permitted

Instructs snowmobile riders not to enter a particular area because of a wildlife closure.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black and red lettering.



Caribou Habitat No Snowmobiling

Instructs the rider not to ride into the caribou habitat area.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black and red lettering.



Sensitive Area Closed to All Motorized Vehicles

Instructs all motorized vehicles not to enter the sensitive area.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black and red lettering.



This Trail Accesses Areas Closed to Snowmobiles Please Follow Signs

Informs the rider that they are entering an area where closures are in effect and to follow the posted signs.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black lettering and red lettering.



Do Not Follow Caribou Tracks

Instructs the rider not to follow caribou tracks.

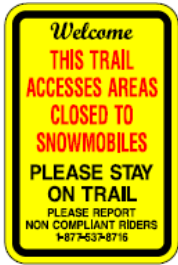
12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black lettering.



Closed Snowmobile Area

Informs the rider that the area is closed and to observe and report all animal sightings.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black and red lettering.



**This Trail Accesses Areas Closed to Snowmobiles
Please Stay On Trail**

Inform the rider that they are entering an area where closures are in effect and to stay on the trail.

18 × 12 in rectangle. Yellow background, black and red lettering.



Do Your Part Report Non Compliant Riders

Inform the rider to report non compliant riders.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black and red lettering.



These Trails are Maintained by

Inform the rider that the trails they are riding are maintained by a certain club and to respect other riders.

18 × 12 in rectangle. Yellow background, black lettering.



These Trails are Maintained by

Inform the rider that the trails they are riding are maintained by a certain club and that local closures are in effect.

18 × 12 in rectangle. Yellow background, black lettering.



Caribou Habitat Please Stay On Trail

Inform the rider that there is caribou habitat in the area and to stay on the trail.

12 × 12 in square. Yellow background, black and red lettering.