



Mountain Caribou Management Implementation Newsletter – Volume 3

March 2008

We continue to move forward on all aspects of the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan. Even though it may seem that one management area is moving quicker than another, all of the management areas are being worked on in a coordinated manner. These management areas are:

- ***Habitat management***
- ***Predator / prey control***
- ***Augmentation***
- ***Recreation - public snowmobiling***
- ***Recreation - Commercial tenures***

Habitat Management

The first draft of the incremental habitat reports have been completed and reviewed by the entire Directors' team (as well as the reports have been made available to First Nations and stakeholder groups). To ensure that we spatially captured all the proposed high suitability winter habitat areas in the Central Kootenay planning unit we have had to examine additional options from the first draft of the habitat report. This has meant the 2B planning unit has required additional time, but through this re-work we have now spatially defined these areas.

The plan is to have the second draft of all the incremental habitat reports (8 planning units) to the Directors' team for review by mid-March. This review will be in conjunction with an assessment of the impact this may have on the Forest Industry (see below under Timber Risk Assessment).

It is planned that these incremental habitat areas will have legal designation by next year that will restrict road building and timber harvesting.

Timber Risk Assessment

One of the commitments that Government made to the Forest Industry was that no mill would be made non-viable by the implementation of the caribou recovery actions. To this end, the Economic and Trade branch of Ministry of Forests and Range was engaged to provide information to use in the assessment of economic risk to the Forest Industry associated with changes to the timber supply resulting from the mountain caribou habitat set asides. Decision makers can use the information provided in the Economic and Trade report to determine the level of risk associated with a particular reduction in timber supply in any particular forest district, or in the broader timber market areas. This assessment provides only one source of information and should be used in conjunction

with information from potentially affected licensees and processors, in addition to information from regional and district foresters.

Forest Health

As there will be no defined recruitment areas set aside, we must ensure that we try to protect as much of this high habitat as we can from fire and forest health issue. A forest health team has been put together and is being led by Tavis MacDonald. The team includes both Provincial entomologists and a Provincial fire specialist, as well as two caribou herd experts. The Terms of Reference have been completed and the first draft of the Forest Health report will be out in couple of weeks.

Predator Control

There are a number of activities currently taking place so Ministry of Environment can better assess the impact predators are having on the mountain caribou. Twenty-two wolf packs within mountain caribou range are currently being monitored through radio-telemetry, and others are monitoring through snow-track surveys.

A few key predators have been removed where the risk to mountain caribou is high. Decisions regarding the necessity of further animal removal will be based on analysis of the collaring data and the risk to caribou populations.

Wolf fertility control is another option being utilized and must be used in conjunction with other management tools. In most cases the use of fertility control alone will not result in rapid changes in animal numbers but it does allow the alpha pair to hold their territory against the ingress of other wolves.

Augmentation

Census of mountain caribou populations and potential source populations will be completed between March and June of this year. Until the census is done there will be no decisions on augmentation or translocation of mountain caribou.

Public Recreation

A decision framework for public recreation has been completed and sent out to the various stakeholders. This will drive the process for evaluating whether to allow public snowmobiling in defined areas under a stewardship management agreement (SMA). Generally, if proposed science team closure areas align with the areas proposed for protection of habitat then these areas will be closed to snowmobiling activities.

Likelihood of effectiveness of SMAs will be determined by three factors; the ability of the club to execute the SMA, the accessibility of the area, and the likelihood of general compliance with the SMA. This will be tempered by a risk of assessment of the likelihood of displacement of Mountain Caribou. All areas under an SMA will continue to be monitored through the adaptive management process to ensure that activities do not impact mountain caribou.

So far there has been some very productive dialogue between the clubs and we are moving closer to finalizing the SMAs in some areas.

For the full Public Recreation Decision Framework, please refer to the website <http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/sarco/mc/>.

Commercial Recreation

An Effectiveness Monitoring Workshop will be delivered by the University of Victoria to develop tools and approaches to determining the effectiveness of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) of many commercial operators that work within Caribou habitat. Operations such as Cat-Skiing and Heli-Skiing have had these BMPs in place for a long time. The Effectiveness Monitoring Program that results from the workshop will address how to determine compliance of operators in implementing the BMPs, what impact on caribou they are having and identify future research needs for interactions between mountain caribou and commercial recreation operators. Once this monitoring program is developed, we will be meeting with the associations and independent operators to move forward on implementation .

If you have any questions on the Mountain Caribou Recovery Program in British Columbia, please refer to the following website <http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/sarco/mc/> or call me at 377-2163.

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