



Mountain Caribou Management Implementation Update

October 30, 2007

Background

As you know the Mountain Caribou announcement occurred on October 16th in Victoria. The press release reached many parts of the world and for the most part was well received with many groups now awaiting the implementation portion of the plan.

The original cabinet submission was based on science teams recommendations with a goal of recovering Mountain Caribou to the 1995 populations (2500 animals) across the Mountain Caribou range within 20 years in those planning units with greater than 10 animals (more info can be found at the SARCO website <http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/sarco/mc/>). There has been a dedicated team of professionals working on preparing a balanced cabinet submission for the last 3 years. This is truly an interagency project that will involve most of the natural resource agencies and will require a truly coordinated approach in its implementation.

Speaking of implementation we have assembled a number of excellent people to take on this challenging task.

The project has been divided up into 5 categories or levers and all of these levers need to be operated to ensure a successfully recovery.

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

Habitat

The Mountain Caribou habitat range has been divided into 5 planning areas for Habitat implementation with a Chair in each unit. The 5 planning areas, and chairs are:

Revelstoke /Shuswap Team: Chair Frank Wilmer - ILMB
Wells Gary North Thompson Team Chair: Jim Britton - ILMB
Caribou Chilcotin Team Chair: Darcy Peel - ILMB
Prince George Team Chair: Howard Madill - ILMB
Kootenay Team Chair: Mike Geisler - Contractor
(see appendix for team members)

The Terms of Reference are now complete for the Habitat team and are available on the SaRCO website if you are interested. The goal of the teams are to recommend the distribution of incremental Mountain Caribou habitat and associated management across the planning units as well as using the defined animal population targets in their recommendations.

Recreation

The recreation lever has been divided into 2 categories; Public (snowmobiling) and Commercial tenured winter recreation. The Mountain Caribou habitat range has been broken into 6 planning areas for Recreation implementation with a chair in each unit. The 6 planning areas, and chairs are:

Revelstoke /Shuswap Team: Chair Darcy Monchak - ILMB
Wells Gary North Thompson Team Chair: Jim Britton - ILMB
Caribou Chilcotin Team Chair: Kate Greskiw - ILMB
Prince George Team Chair: Howard Madill - ILMB
West Kootenay Team Chair: Steve Flett – ILMB
East Kootenay Team Chair: Bill Adair - ILMB

Doug Krogel - Manager Backcountry Recreation leads an interagency team and reports to the Cross Government Directors team

The TORs have now been completed and can be accessed on the SaRCO website. The intent of the Public Snowmobiling component is that clubs will have an opportunity to work with government staff to develop stewardship management agreement (SMA) for each of the riding areas. The completed SMAs will be reviewed by the Recreation team initially (including herd experts) and then run those through a "risk threshold" process (under development - led by Doug Krogel), if the proposed management actions do not exceed the risk threshold, the SMA will be recommended to government for acceptance and signing. If it exceeds the risk threshold, the area in question will be recommended for closure. This allows the science team to provide a technical review of the proposed SMAs but relieves them of the decision making burden. Where no agreements can be reached with the clubs government will still proceed with making a decision, which may mean that these areas will be closed.

Recreation - Commercial

The intent is that Government staff will work with the existing commercial tenure operator to amend operator's management plans and review their current Best Management Practices in relation to Caribou management where they exist and establishing others where they do not and then evaluating the success of these in relation to minimizing the likelihood of further displacing mountain caribou. The current moratorium (s. 16 Land Act reserve) on new commercial backcountry winter recreation applications in core Mountain Caribou habitats will be extended for five years to allow time to determine whether activities under the MOU are benefiting Mountain Caribou recovery. As well, for those areas outside of the current moratorium area (but within the Mountain Caribou range) an additional one year moratorium on new commercial backcountry winter recreation applications will be implemented to allow habitat and backcountry recreation planning to be completed. If agreements cannot be established then areas may be closed within their management plans.

Predator Prey Control

As you can understand that this is a very sensitive issue, however this is one of the key areas that needs to be addressed for the survival of the caribou. MOE will be working closely with First Nations as well as other groups to devise a strategy for success.

Augmentation

For some herds to survive there will need to be augmentation of additional members to build up the population numbers and add diversity to the group. Based on recent census information a decision will be made whether this may be possible to move herd members or not. Ministry of Environment staff will be working on a strategy based on the most up to date census information and will work closely with First Nations affected by the translocations.

Policy Advisory Team

One of the key areas for success will be in having the proper tools in place to ensure that these areas are truly protected for caribou. The Policy advisory team will be tasked with identifying the proper legal framework for closures and any other policy issues that may arise through the implementation process.

All these groups report to the Cross Government Directors Team:

Peter Lishman - ILMB - CHAIR
Mark Zacharias - SARCO
Ralph Archibald - MOFR
Rod Davis - MOE
Bill Marshall - MTSA
Norman Marcy - EMPR
Pat Field – Contractor for SARCO
Steve Wilson – Contractor for SARCO

First Nations

There are 28 First Nation Bands and numerous Tribal Councils involved in the Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan area. The intent is to involve the impacted First Nations at a local level with central coordination. I would like to thank the various Regional Managers for their support in their corporate thinking on managing this task. This will result in communication being coordinated centrally and delivered locally.

Amy Tipler has been tasked to act as the First Nations coordinator and will involve a number of agency First Nation liaison staff. Their goal will be to encourage the successful implementation of the Mountain Caribou plan, particularly those bands that may be impacted by any of the recommended implementation management levers for recovering the mountain caribou population.

Enforcement /Monitoring

One of the keys for effective implementation will be to establish an effective monitoring and enforcement program to gauge our success. The planning for this process will be started in the New Year.

Time Lines

The world will be watching how we implement this project and we will be evaluated on our progression. The Federal Government will be reviewing our progress in 2009 so we need to move ahead rapidly to ensure that we have all the necessary levers in place at the right times.

Even though this is a long term project, our timelines are aggressive and planned for completion in March 2008 to provide certainty to resource sectors.

If you have any questions please call me at **(250) 377-2163** or refer to the SARCO website or contact one of the Planning chairs in your area.

Peter Lishman RPF
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Kamloops