

Mountain Caribou Implementation Plan

Public Snowmobiling Component

Terms of Reference

Change Log:

No.	Original Text	Replacement Text	By Whom	Date
1	<p><i>The first sentence in the first paragraph under Projective Objective (page 4) originally read:</i></p> <p>To reach agreements, where necessary, with local snowmobile clubs in order to meet the government objective of minimising displacement of mountain caribou, by backcountry recreation activities, from their preferred habitat..</p>	<p><i>The first sentence in the first paragraph under Projective Objective (page 4) should now read:</i></p> <p>The project objective is to reach stewardship management agreements (SMA), where necessary, with local snowmobile clubs to manage their activities so as not to displace mountain caribou.</p>	Amy Tipler	Nov. 15/07

Mountain Caribou Implementation Plan

Public Snowmobiling Component

Terms of Reference

This TOR supports the implementation component of the Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan for the recovery objective to manage the human footprint associated with public snowmobiling in Mountain Caribou habitat. This TOR, in conjunction with complementary TORs for the other five recovery objectives below, will form the guiding principles of implementation of the Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan.

Snowmobile clubs will be given the opportunity to work with government staff to develop Stewardship Management Agreements (SMAs) for each of their riding areas. The completed SMAs will be provided to the Science Team for review in the context of contributing to the population targets for each planning unit. If the Science Team demonstrates through sound rationales, based on the best available science, that the SMA will have a negative impact on a planning unit reaching its population target these areas will be legally closed.

Recommendations developed through this TOR from provincial coordination teams will be reviewed by a cross-government director's team who will then bring forward these recommendations to government for legal protection.

Project Background:

The goal of the Implementation Plan is as follows:

Halt the decline of mountain caribou within seven years for each Planning Unit and recover mountain caribou to 1995 population levels (2500 animals) across the mountain caribou range within 20 years in those Planning Units with greater than 10 animals.

This recovery goal will be realized through the following six recovery objectives:

1. Protect mountain caribou habitat from logging and road building

The Mountain Caribou Science Team identified habitat loss as the underlying cause of mountain caribou population declines with mortality by predators as the proximate cause. Halting and reversing this habitat loss is a central tenet of the Recovery Implementation Plan. Government's goal is to protect 95% of the high suitability winter habitat within identified herd areas. Accommodations will be made to protect local forest operator viability and to address isolated or otherwise ineffective habitat by increasing protection elsewhere, ensuring future recruitment of high suitability habitat. In addition, government will reserve from harvesting areas within the non-THLB in the most recent Timber Supply Review that are identified as mountain caribou habitat through a legal order, or variance to land use plans, after an operational assessment is completed to ensure that AAC and forest operations are not impacted in the short term (5 years or next TSR).

2. Ensure the effectiveness of protected habitat by managing the human footprint

Winter backcountry recreation (e.g., backcountry skiing, heli-skiing, cat-skiing and snowmobiling) has the potential to displace mountain caribou from their preferred early and late winter habitat. These activities need to be managed in order to secure effective habitat for mountain caribou. The Recovery Implementation Plan commits government to work with users to manage their activities in a manner that minimises the displacement of mountain caribou. Where activities result in unacceptable displacement of mountain caribou, areas will be closed to those activities. Consultations with users are currently underway and many areas have already been closed through legal designations or voluntary agreements and implementation of operational guidelines.

3. Manage predator populations where they are preventing the recovery of mountain caribou populations

Although habitat loss was identified by the Science Team as the underlying cause of mountain caribou population declines, high predator populations and unsustainable predation rates on mountain caribou have resulted in significant declines in mountain caribou populations since the mid-1990s. Thus, the Science Team concluded that habitat protection alone will not reverse negative population trends in the short-term. The Recovery Implementation Plan commits government to undertake a variety of measures to address unsustainable predation rates on mountain caribou. These measures include: changing hunting allocations to increase harvest of cougars and wolves; increased trapping; supporting non-lethal control measures, such as wolf sterilization; and the targeted removal of individuals or, where necessary, packs.

4. Manage the primary prey of caribou predators to better reflect historic conditions

Habitat alteration and hunting allocations combined with fewer severe winters in recent years have resulted in higher populations and wider distributions of moose and deer than estimated historic averages. This in turn has resulted in higher populations of predators, mainly wolves and cougars, which prey opportunistically on mountain caribou. The Recovery Implementation Plan commits government to reduce moose and deer populations through changes in hunting allocations to rebalance the predator-prey system.

5. Augment critically endangered herds that are feasible to recover

Small populations are slow to recover, even with favourable environmental conditions. Augmenting small mountain caribou populations (10-50 individuals) with animals transplanted from healthy herds elsewhere can increase population growth rates and more immediately reduce the demographic risks associated with small populations. The Recovery Implementation Plan commits government to augmenting the southernmost mountain caribou herds. In addition, government is considering using maternity pens for the southernmost herds to protect newborns and calves from predators.

6. Support adaptive management and research to increase the probability of successful recovery

The Science Team identified key uncertainties related to mountain caribou ecology and the efficacy of proposed recovery actions. Implementation efforts will need to be monitored closely and assessed to determine whether the strategy needs to be modified in order to meet recovery goals. In addition, research addressing knowledge gaps should be

supported. The Recovery Implementation Plan includes the development of adaptive management and effectiveness monitoring plans for habitat, recreation and predator-prey management efforts.

This Terms of Reference addresses the implementation of Objective #2 above.

Project Objective

The project objective is to reach stewardship management agreements (SMA), where necessary, with local snowmobile clubs to manage their activities so as not to displace mountain caribou. Achievement of this project objective will occur through a standardized decision-making process to identify and prioritize areas in which local stewardship management agreements will be required. Discussions will proceed under the terms of cross-agency Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the BC Snowmobile Federation and the Association of BC Snowmobile Clubs. Clubs will be given the opportunity to work with government staff to develop Stewardship Management Agreements (SMAs). The completed SMAs will be provided to the Science Team for technical review in the context of contributing to the population targets for each planning unit. There will be a process defined on how SMAs will be reviewed and evaluated. If proposed SMAs will result in unacceptable risk of displacement of mountain caribou then the area will be recommended to government for legal closure.

Comment [a1]: Change #1, by Amy Tipler Nov. 15/07

Key Project Deliverables

By October 31, 2007

1. Identification of Science Team proposed snowmobile closure areas that are necessary to manage for snowmobile use, reflecting government's decision on mountain caribou recovery. This will be based on input from regional government representatives as well as riding area prioritizations to maximize likelihood of mountain caribou recovery and minimize loss of riding opportunities for snowmobilers. The foundation for input will be based on scientific rationales documented by herd experts from the science team for each proposed closure area.

By January 31, 2008

2. End of discussions with stakeholders and deadline for proposals for stewardship management agreements (including voluntary closures and agreed to proposed legal closures) with local clubs around snowmobile use for areas identified in #1 above.
3. Recommendations, based on local herd expert consultation, presented to the cross government directors team by the Manager, Backcountry Recreation on proposed stewardship management agreements and remaining areas identified in #1 above in which agreements have not been reached through local consultative processes (including justification for the request to obtain a director's level decision).
4. Recommendations, including local herd expert consultation, presented to the cross government directors team by the Manager, Backcountry Recreation on opportunities to direct snowmobiling activities towards areas outside of current mountain caribou herd areas.

By March 31, 2008

5. The cross government directors team approval and finalization of proposed stewardship management agreements that will achieve government's objective to minimise displacement of mountain caribou.

6. Advancement of cross government directors team proposals for legislated snowmobile closures in those areas identified in #3 above that are consistent with other implementation components of the recovery plan and in consultation with local herd experts.

Project Description:

Government has committed to backcountry recreation management to reduce the displacement of mountain caribou in early and late winter habitat. Science team members will be fine tuning boundaries of the proposed closure areas and providing specific rationale for each recommended closure.

The purpose of this TOR is to outline the process by which areas requiring management will be identified (by the Science Team) and for which voluntary agreements on proposed snowmobile closures will be developed with local clubs and independent riders (non-commercial snowmobilers without club membership) to meet the Project Objective.

Discussions with the appropriate representatives of local snowmobile clubs will occur at the planning unit level with local planning teams consisting of regional ILMB, MoE, MoFR and MTSA staff under the direction of the Manager Backcountry Recreation. If the government teams of regional staff are unable to come to agreement with snowmobile clubs and independent riders the government will still proceed with making a decision.

Recommendations of the manager will be reviewed by a cross-government directors team who will assess the ability of stewardship management agreements to meet recovery objectives. If proposed SMAs will result in unacceptable risk of displacement of mountain caribou then the area will be recommended to government for legal closure.

Key Organizational Units, Roles and Responsibilities

Cross Government Directors Team:

Responsible for project oversight with director-level members from ILMB (Mark Zacharias/ Peter Lishman), MTSA (Bill Marshall), MoE (Rod Davis), and MoFR (Ralph Archibald)

Key accountabilities include:

- Approving TORs for all components and getting approval from ADM's for commitment of human and financial resources
- Identifying and evaluating appropriate legislative and policy tools for establishing and enforcing proposed closure areas based on Provincial Coordination Team recommendations
- Developing options and making recommendations to ADM committee on decision points where agreements cannot be reached

Provincial Recreation Team:

Responsible for overall project coordination and oversight of regional consultation processes with management-level members from ILMB (Peter Lishman, chair), MTSA (Bill Marshall), MoE (Jenny Feick) and MoFR (Director's delegate).

Key accountabilities include:

- Establishing direction to the Manager, Backcountry Recreation and regional staff

- Ensuring that processes proceed in a manner that supports the development of local stewardship management agreements and snowmobiling MOUs
- Resolving policy issues (e.g. adaptive management)
- Funding local consultative processes and stewardship/training opportunities where necessary
- Coordinating FN engagement
- Ensuring that proposed actions are compatible with the other management levers (Habitat, Predator/Prey, Augmentation, etc.) and resolving any conflicts
- Managing communications
- Managing issues
- Evaluating Regional Coordination teams' recommendations and advancing final recommendations to government for decision on establishing and removing legal protections and orders

Local Planning Teams:

Responsible for project execution and consultations; led by the Manager, Backcountry Recreation, Doug Krogel, appointed full-time to this position, with support from regional ILMB, MoE, MoFR and MTSA staff.

Key accountabilities include:

- Incorporating local knowledge for mountain caribou management, including signage, brochures, maps, training efforts, public education, trailhead stewards, and groomed access trails into the process.
- Ensuring documentation for closure rationales are provided by herd experts.
- Prioritise riding areas in mountain caribou habitat based on the following:
 - 1) Level of use for local and visiting riders
 - 2) Type of riding opportunity (e.g. trail/bowl riding)
 - 3) Impact of closure on local snowmobiling opportunities
 - 4) Potential social/economic impacts
 - 5) Science Team recommendations
- Working with designated ILMB GIS technicians and clubs and operators to develop detailed and accurate maps of snowmobile use including tenure areas and legal and voluntary closures for each planning unit.
- Providing local planning teams with a list of areas that require stewardship management agreements by October 31, 2007, based on the prioritization of riding areas by use and importance to local clubs and independent riders.
- Identifying snowmobile clubs for consultation who could potentially be impacted by closures and facilitating club and independent rider participation in discussions.
- Identifying opportunities for alternative strategies to achieve recovery objectives (e.g. opening non-mountain caribou habitat to snowmobiling, re-evaluating existing closures, developing permit systems for limited use within existing closures, developing access trails through core habitat, creating or removing infrastructure to support riding in strategic areas).
- Consulting with herd experts to assess the likelihood that stewardship and voluntary closure agreements will minimise displacement by snowmobiles and meet mountain caribou recovery objectives.
- Coordinating and facilitating the development of local stewardship management agreements for riding within proposed closure areas.
- Mapping and summarizing agreements for presentation to the cross government directors Team (including explanation of how alternative proposals meet recovery objectives).
- Managing information and documenting the process.

Guiding Principles and Process Bounds:

Use of the Science Team proposed snowmobile closure areas

- Prioritization of snowmobile riding areas will be focused on the proposed Science Team snowmobile closure areas within core mountain caribou habitat.
- Prioritization of closure areas will be based on rationales developed by herd experts.
- Local mapping and knowledge of existing legislated closures will inform the development of a set of maps of proposed closures for consultations within each planning unit by ILMB staff in Victoria.
- Local herd experts will be consulted to ensure that voluntary and legal snowmobile agreements and alternative strategies meet recovery objectives.

Use of existing legal and policy tools to enforce snowmobile closures

- Potential tools for establishing and enforcing snowmobile closures include the Wildlife Act, Forest and Range Practices Act (section 58), Land Act and voluntary agreements for stewardship and memorandums of understanding

Consistency with interagency MOUs with BCSF and ABCSC

- Approaches to meet recovery objectives will be consistent across all planning units and among all types of backcountry recreation
- Local project teams will ensure this process proceeds under broad guidance of the principles outlined in MOUs (appendix A)
- Currently established operating practices and best practices will be used to form the starting point for the development and assessment of alternative strategies to meet recovery objectives
- Wherever consistent with recovery objectives, strategies that maximize opportunities for club stewardship and participation in monitoring and adaptive management will be prioritized

Process participants

- Any requests for changes to the composition of the local project teams require approval from the cross government directors team
- First Nations will have an open invitation to participate in local project teams at any time

Decision model

- Consensus within the local planning team is not required in order for teams to make recommendations to the cross government directors team. Where consensus cannot be reached within a local planning team those areas will be brought to the cross government directors team's attention at the earliest possible date by the manager of backcountry recreation.
- Consistent with the *New Directions on Land Use Planning*, recommendations from the regional coordination teams will not necessarily be vetted by land use planning tables before being advanced to government for endorsement and legal designation

Local Planning Teams specific Terms of Reference

Roles and responsibilities

The Manager, Backcountry Recreation will be responsible for leading and coordinating local planning processes, identifying specific needs for each planning team and ensuring consistency among planning units and with the snowmobile TOR. The local planning teams will make a request to the cross government directors team if additional funding is necessary to meet the Project Objective

Key responsibilities for the Manager, Backcountry Recreation

- i. Initiate and oversee the consultation process

- ii. Organize and mediate consultation meetings
- iii. Identify existing local measures for mountain caribou protection and recovery
- iv. Facilitate, participate in and assess the development of alternative strategies to meet recovery objectives
- v. Develop and present balanced recommendations for snowmobile management in mountain caribou habitat to the cross government directors Team

Key responsibilities for local planning team members:

- i. Contribute local knowledge of snowmobile use and conflict in proposed snowmobile closures
- ii. Provide accurate spatializations of existing voluntary and legal closures and participate in a review of proposed closures and identify potential riding opportunities
- iii. Facilitate and participate in the consultative process with appropriate representatives of snowmobile clubs and associations
- iv. Identify adaptive management needs and opportunities as appropriate

Local Planning Team Membership

West Kootenay (planning unit 2B and 1A)

Regional participants are:

- a. ILMB - Steve Flett, Chair
- b. MoE - Leo deGroot
- c. MTSA - Fred Thiessen
- d. MTSA (Adventure Tourism) – Harry Mitchell
- e. Mike Giesler, Habitat Chair
- f. GIS Support – Russ Hendry/Kathleen McGuinness
- g. Ktunaxa Tribal Council - Dan Paradis

East Kootenay (planning unit 1B)

Regional participants are:

- a. ILMB – Bill Adair, Chair
- b. MoE - Leo deGroot
- c. MTSA - Fred Thiessen
- d. MTSA (Adventure Tourism) – Harry Mitchell
- e. Stu Clow (or alternate), Habitat Chair
- f. GIS Support – Russ Hendry
- g. Ktunaxa Tribal Council - Dan Paradis

Revelstoke (planning unit 3A)

Regional participants are:

- a. ILMB - Darcy Monchak, Chair
- b. MoE – Leo deGroot (Cory Legebokow - alternate)
- c. MTSA - Ken Gibson/Fred Thiessen
- d. MTSA (Adventure Tourism) Andy Oetter/Harry Mitchell
- e. Frank Wilmer, Habitat Chair
- f. GIS Support – Russ Hendry
- g. First Nations

Wells Gray – Thompson (planning unit 4A)

Regional participants are:

- a. ILMB - Jim Britton, Chair (also Habitat Chair)

- b. MoE - John Surgenor
- c. MTSA - Jennifer Eastwood/Elaine Gillette
- d. MTSA (Adventure Tourism) Andy Oetter/Vera Vukelich
- e. GIS Support – Steve Kachanoski/Clarence Lai
- f. SARCO Support – Pat Field
- g. SRMP Support – Ernie Maynard
- h. MOFR – Ron Van der Zwan
- i. Simpcw First Nations

Cariboo-Chilcotin (planning unit 5B)

Regional participants are:

- a. ILMB – Kate Greskiw, Chair
- b. MoE - John Youds
- c. MTSA – Jennifer Eastwood/Desi Cheverie (WL)/Doug Harris (100 Mile)
- d. MTSA (Adventure Tourism) – Vera Vukelich
- e. Darcy Peel, Habitat Chair
- f. GIS Support – Mark McGirr
- g. First Nations

Prince George (planning unit 5A and 6)

Regional participants are:

- a. ILMB - Howard Madill, Chair (also Habitat Chair)
- b. MoE - Mike Peterson/Bob Brade/Bill Arthur
- c. MTSA – Gary Westfall
- d. MTSA (Adventure Tourism) – Vera Vukelich
- e. GIS Support – Mark McGirr
- f. First Nations