

Management Agreement

Between

**Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Resource Management Division,
Cariboo Region**

Water Land and Air Protection, Environmental Stewardship Division, Cariboo Region

And

Quesnel Highlands Management Society

For

Snowmobile Use in the Eastern Cariboo Region

1. Purpose:

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Water Land and Air Protection and the Quesnel Highlands Management Society have agreed to enter into a two year voluntary management agreement (“the Agreement”) to mitigate potential impact by snowmobiles on mountain caribou and mountain caribou habitat in the Eastern Cariboo region.

2. Background:

In May 2000 Mountain caribou were designated as a red listed species in British Columbia by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). The federal government’s new *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) requires British Columbia to develop a recovery plan to address the threats to mountain caribou and its habitat.

In the Cariboo Region Mountain Caribou occupy high elevation sub alpine winter range in the eastern Cariboo Mountains and are presumed sensitive to high levels of disturbance. The Cariboo Chilcotin Land Use Plan (CCLUP) recognised the precarious situation of mountain caribou and provided the following direction:

- The overriding objective is to maintain habitat values for mountain caribou within the Cariboo Forest region.
- Meeting an objective of limiting potential disturbance to mountain caribou by snowmobiles will require zoning.

A Mountain Caribou Strategy report released in October 2000 provided guidance for managing caribou; the overriding objective of the report was to address three major issues:

- Maintain habitat values for mountain caribou
- Manage predation levels on mountain caribou
- Manage access to limit potential disturbance and possible displacement

Measures are being taken under the CCLUP to address habitat values and predation of the mountain caribou.

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM), Water Land and Air Protection (WLAP) and the Quesnel Highlands Management Society (QHMS) have worked together over the past two years to address the “access issues”, specifically snowmobile access in the eastern Cariboo Region. Agreement has been reached by all three parties on voluntary closure areas where snowmobiles will not be permitted (see map 1).

There are a few specific areas where further refinement of the voluntary closure areas will be determined through field reconnaissance and/or further discussion as information becomes available during the 2003 snowmobile season. WLAP and QHMS will work jointly on determining the following refinements;

- Access to Eureka peak from Mica Mountain riding area
- A corridor route through the east end of the Cariboo Mountain closure area from Keithley Creek
- Corridor into Cameron Ridge riding area from the 8400 road.

Highly sensitive caribou areas in the lower elevations east of the north arm of Quesnel Lake and between the north and east arm of Quesnel Lake are closed to snowmobile activity. However, it is understood by all parties that local use (cabin owners and residences along the north arm and the north side of the east arm of Quesnel Lake) will continue. It will not be the responsibility of the Quesnel Highlands Snowmobile Society to communicate the Agreement to local users or monitor their activity. WLAP will monitor these areas during the term of this Agreement. The longer term management of these areas will be discussed at each of the annual reviews.

The Bill Miner Creek riding area and the Perseus corridor (marked with blue hatch lines on map 1) are considered highly sensitive caribou habitat areas by WLAP and are not recommended for snowmobile activity. However, until further information is available on the affects of snowmobiles on Mountain caribou (expected in March 2003) these areas will be considered “grey areas” to be negotiated at the 2003 annual review.

Legitimate industrial use of snowmobiles will not be restricted under this Agreement.

3. Parties to the Agreement:

1. Quesnel Highlands Management Society (QHMS) consisting of the following snowmobile clubs;
 - a. Mica Mountain, 100 Mile House BC
 - b. Powder Kings, Williams Lake, BC
 - c. Wells Snowmobile Club, Wells BC
 - d. Representing all snowmobile clubs in the region
2. Ministry of Water Land and Air Protection (WLAP), Environmental Stewardship Division, Williams Lake, BC
3. Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM) Resource Management Division, Williams Lake, BC

4. Definitions for the purpose of this Agreement:

- “Voluntary Management Agreement” means all parties to the Agreement (MSRM, WLAP and QHMS) will work in partnership wilfully meeting the requirements of the Agreement through voluntary actions.
- “Voluntary Closure Zone” means areas (see map 1) agreed upon by the three parties (MSRM, WLAP and QHMS) will be snowmobile free zones for the purpose of protecting the mountain caribou and its habitat from possible habitat displacement and/or potential disturbance.
- “Caution Zone” means the area (see map1) identifies caribou sensitive habitat. It is not closed under this Agreement to the use of snowmobiles; however specific guidelines will apply to snowmobiling in the caution zones (see section 6. of the Agreement).

5. Voluntary Closure Zone

The voluntary closure zones are areas of sensitive caribou habitat. A final map of these zones was confirmed by MSRM, WLAP, and the QHMS in January 2003, for the purpose of this Agreement.

The voluntary closure zones are to receive no snowmobile activity unless a decision is made otherwise at the annual review and an amendment is made to this agreement.

6. Caution Zone

The caution zones are areas of sensitive caribou habitat that have not been closed to snowmobile activity. The approach snowmobilers are expected to take while operating in the caution zone will be awareness and avoidance of wintering animals. Snowmobilers will endeavour to:

- Minimize direct and indirect disturbance to caribou or other wildlife by following these procedures;
 - If caribou tracks are seen do not follow the tracks.
 - If you see caribou, do not approach. Try to go around them at a safe distance or turn off your snowmobile and allow the animals to calmly move away. After caribou have departed, leave the area.
- Record where and when caribou or caribou tracks have been sighted and relay this information to MSRM or WLAP as soon as possible. A standard form for recording this information will be provided by WLAP.
- Respect temporary closure notices. (If caribou are frequently being observed in one location within the “caution zone” a decision may be made by both the QHMS and WLAP to temporarily close the area until the caribou move out of the area). For the longer term, MSRM, WLAP and QHMS will work to develop specific guidelines and procedures around temporary closures at the June 2003 annual review.

7. Education and Communication

The Quesnel Highlands Management Society will be responsible for educating the snowmobile users as to the terms of this Agreement.

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management will provide “Mountain Caribou and Snowmobile Access Plan” maps and information pamphlets to the QHMS for distribution to the snowmobilers who ride in the area.

MSRM will provide trailhead signs to the QHMS. The QHMS will be responsible for mounting the signs and setting them up at the parking and take off areas. These signs will provide information to the snowmobilers on:

- the sensitivity of mountain caribou and mountain caribou habitat
- location and explanation of voluntary closure and caution zones
- who to contact for more information

The QHMS will;

- Increase awareness of all snowmobilers riding in the Eastern Cariboo Region regarding mountain caribou conservation issues through communicating the information provided in this Agreement.
- Initiate an information network to provide information to snowmobilers and keep them informed on the Agreement and any new developments. Such things as caribou sightings, compliance, and the results of the annual review could be posted.
- Post temporary closure notices on the trail signs if mountain caribou are sighted in the caution zone, as directed by WLAP and/or MSRM.

8. Monitoring

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, Water Land and Air Protection, and the Quesnel Highlands Management Society agree to work in co-operation to monitor the snowmobile activity that takes place in the Eastern Cariboo Region.

The Ministry of Water Land and Air Protection will:

- Use fixed wing aircraft to monitor the “voluntary closure zones” to determine the level of compliance from the snowmobilers.
- Monitor the location of the caribou in relation to the riding areas (we hope to link this information to a web site to communicate to the snowmobilers on areas to avoid at certain times etc.).
- Monitor Mountain Goats in the Eureka Peak area to help in determining a riding corridor through the area that will not interfere with Mountain Goat habitat.
- Invite one member of the QHMS to attend the occasional monitoring flight.

WLAP anticipates conducting 15 to 20 flights (fixed wing and helicopter) during a five month period (December/02 to May/03) to gather sufficient data to determine if snowmobiles are riding in the “voluntary closure zones” and if so to what extent. Gathering this information in the first

year of the agreement will set a base line for monitoring compliance in the second year of the agreement. WLAP will invite a representative from the QHMS to attend six of these flights.

Quesnel Highlands Management Society will

- Initiate the British Columbia Snowmobile Federation (BCSF) Snow Patrol Program starting January 2003. The BCSF Snow Patrol will observe, record, and report to the QHMS on snowmobile activity in the eastern Cariboo Region. Specifically on any activity in the “voluntary closure zones”.
- Maintain records of all wildlife sightings which will include date and time, location, description and behaviour of the wildlife upon initial sighting. These observations are to be made if sightings occur during the course of “legal” riding. By no means is wildlife to be sought and pursued. Again, the objective is to minimise disturbance to the caribou and other wildlife.
- Provide the records to MSRM and WLAP at the end of each riding season, (May 30, 2002 and May 30, 2003) for inclusion in the annual review

9. Annual Review

The annual review will be an important aspect of this Agreement. It is expected that during the life of this Agreement there will be consistent communication between all parties throughout the year. The annual review however, will be an opportunity to look at the factual data collected and assess whether the objectives set out in the Agreement are being met.

There will be two annual reviews during the term of this Agreement. One will occur on or before June 30, 2003 and one will occur on or before June 30, 2004. MSRM will initiate the review and set up the venue. WLAP will compile the monitoring information collected during the previous riding season and provide the report to the QHMS on or before the annual review.

QHMS will provide the following to MSRM on or before the annual review;

- A compilation of the monitoring information collected from snowmobilers during the previous riding season
- A report explaining what initiatives the QHMS took to educate the snowmobilers on the Agreement.

Specific items (stated throughout this agreement) to be discussed at the June 2003 annual review:

- Eureka Peak (amendment to the closure and mountain goat habitat)
- Low elevation closure areas along the north and east arm of Quesnel Lake
- Bill Miner Creek and Perseus Corridor “grey areas”
- Develop guidelines for temporary closures in the “caution zones”
- Stanley road corridor and the L road corridor (these two areas came forward from the Quesnel club in mid February/03. At this point they are not approved corridors. Further discussion on the exact location of the corridors and the significance of them etc. needs to take place at the 2003 annual review.)

10. Term of the Agreement and Amendment Process

1. This Agreement will be in effect on the day it has been executed and delivered by both parties.
2. This Agreement will be in effect until August 31, 2004.
3. This Agreement in whole or in part may be amended from time to time as agreed by the parties.
4. This Agreement may only be amended by the agreement of the parties in writing.
5. Sixty days prior to the expiration of this Agreement, the parties will review its effectiveness and either:
 - a) terminate the Agreement
 - b) amend the Agreement
 - c) extend the Agreement

Either party may cease involvement in the process established by this Agreement upon 90 days notice to the other party.

It is the intent of all parties to the Agreement to extend the Agreement if the objectives set out in the Agreement prove to have been successfully met.

Signatories to this Agreement:

All snowmobile club representatives are also Directors of the Quesnel Highlands Management Society.

Pierre Dion, President, QHMS

Jude Dion, Mica Mountain Riders

Darlene Koss, Williams Lake Powder Kings

Guy Burlingdet, Quesnel Snowmobile Club

Laurie Lautrup, Mica Mountain Riders
Kings

Jamie MacKay, Williams Lake Powder

Jordy Moore, Williams Lake Powder Kings

Verna Savor, Wells Snowmobile Club

Lothar Vollmer, Wells Snowmobile Club

Herb Langin, Regional Director
Resource Management Division
Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management

Steve Mazur, Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division
Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

Date

Date