PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

ORDER OF THE MINISTER OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

Forest and Range Practices Act

Ministerial Order No.

I, James Cuell, Executive Director of Regional Operations (North Area), as delegate of the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, being satisfied that the following described areas contain habitat that is necessary to meet the habitat requirements for Boreal Caribou *[Rangifer tarandus*] and that the habitat requires special management that is not otherwise provided for under the Government Action Regulation (GAR) or another enactment, order that: wildlife habitat areas (WHAs) 9-181, 9-182, 9-183, 9-184, 9-185 and 9-186 in the Fort Nelson District, are established as set out in Schedule A and managed as provided in Schedule B.

June 17, 2025
Date

Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
(or authorized signatory)

James Cuell, Executive Director of Regional Operations (North Area), Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Printed Name and Title (if authorized signatory)

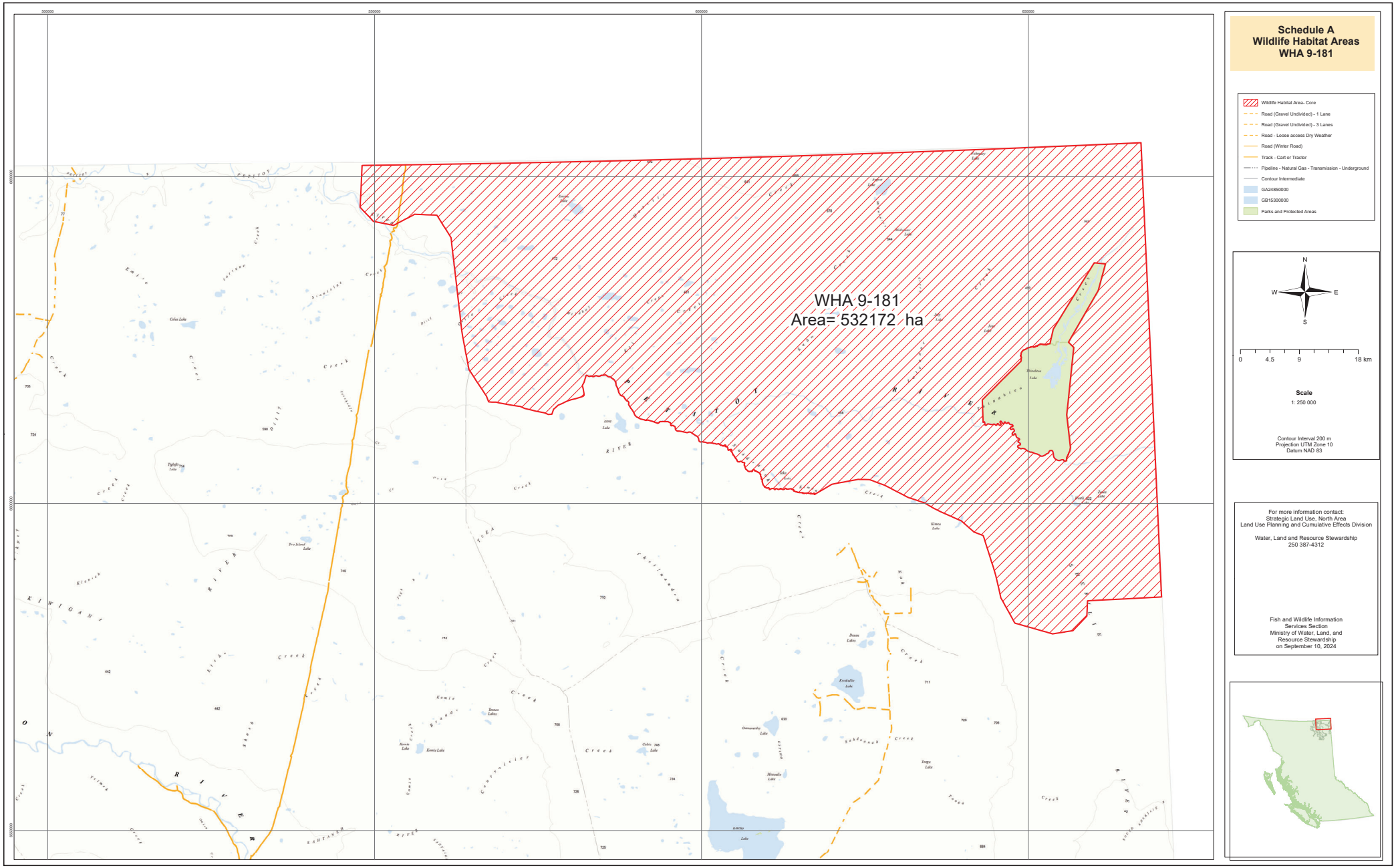
(This part is for administrative purposes only and is not part of the Order.)

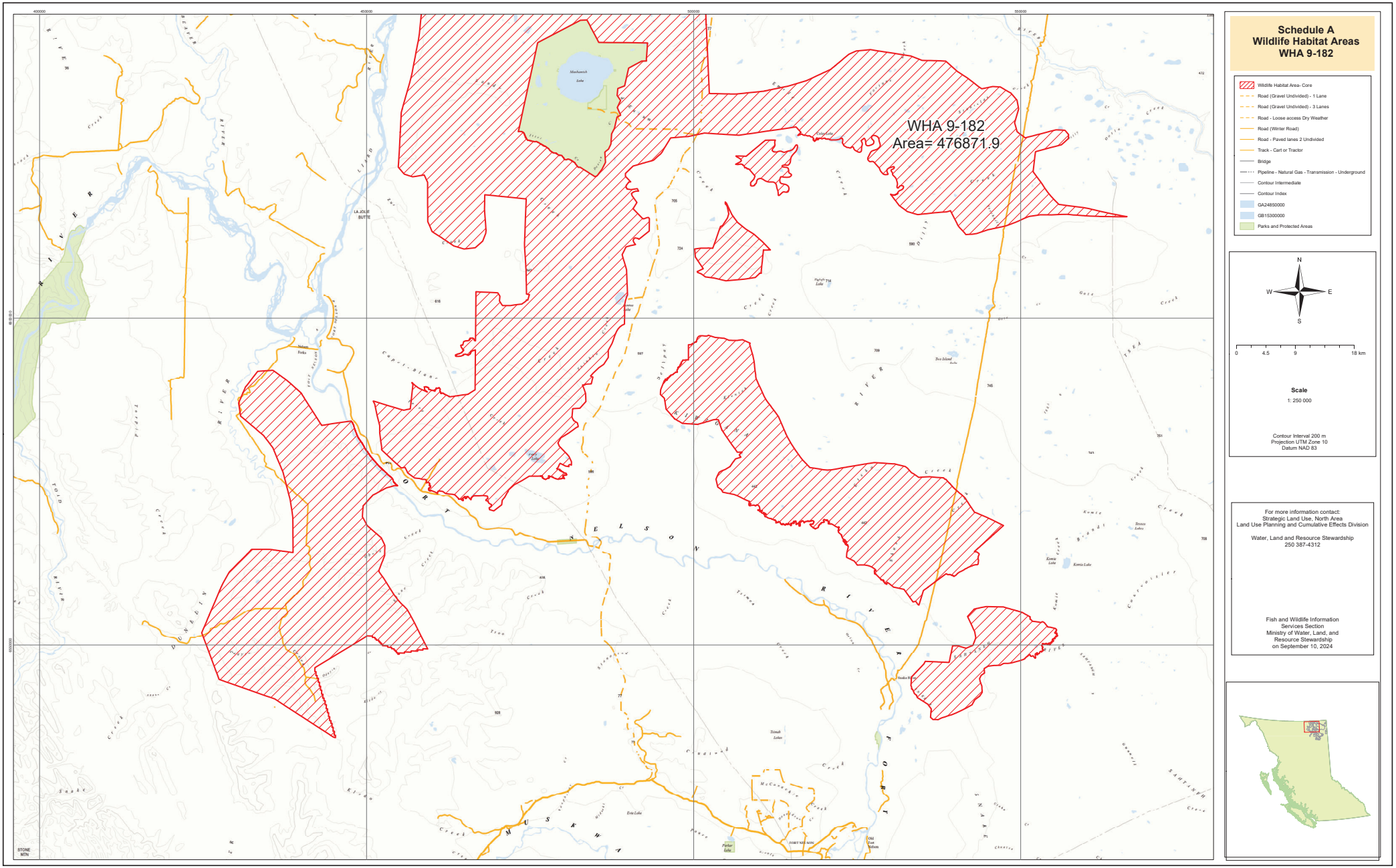
Authority under which Order is made:

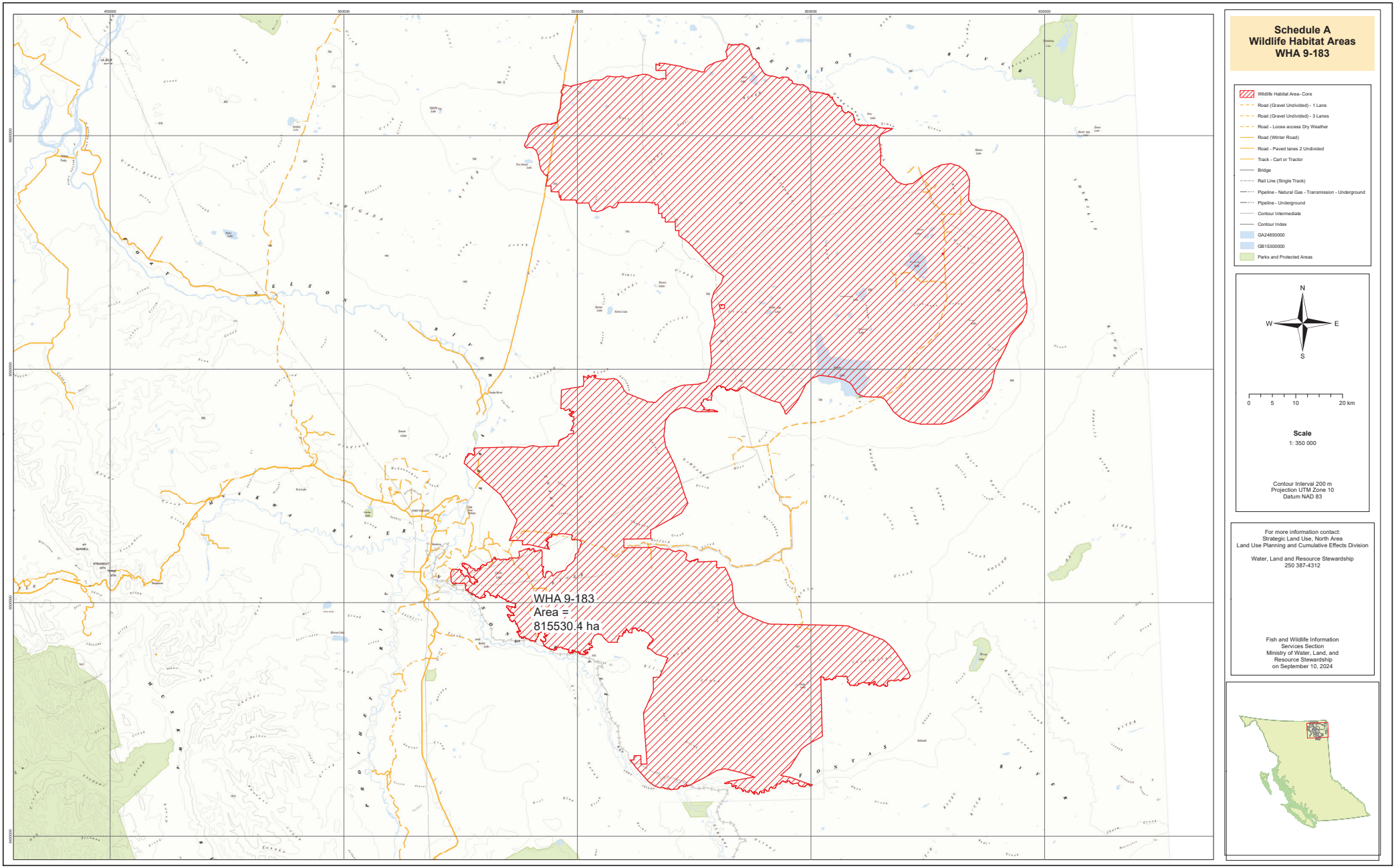
Act and section: Government Actions Regulation (B.C. Reg. 582/2004) ss. 9 (1), 9(2) and 10(1)

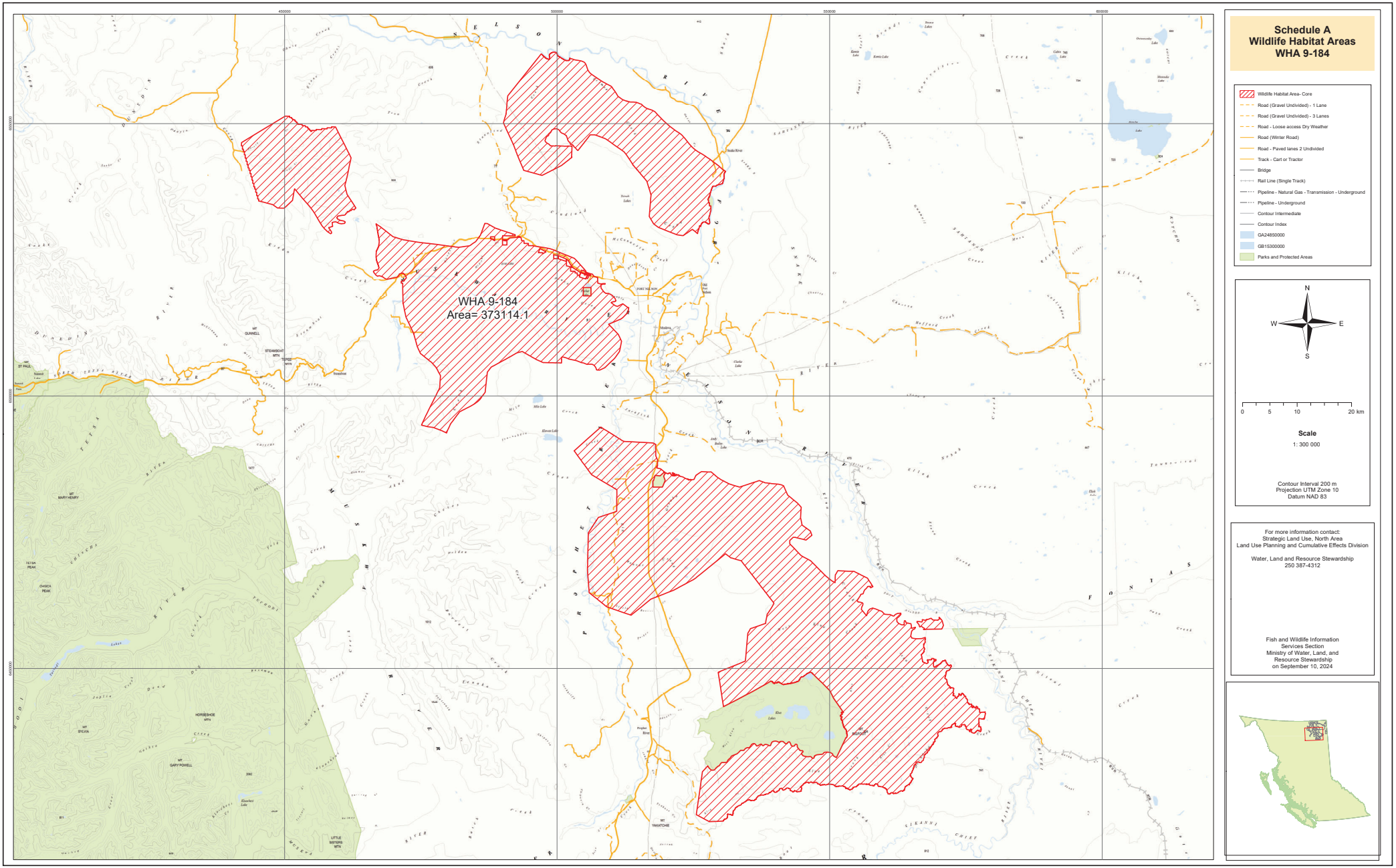
Other:

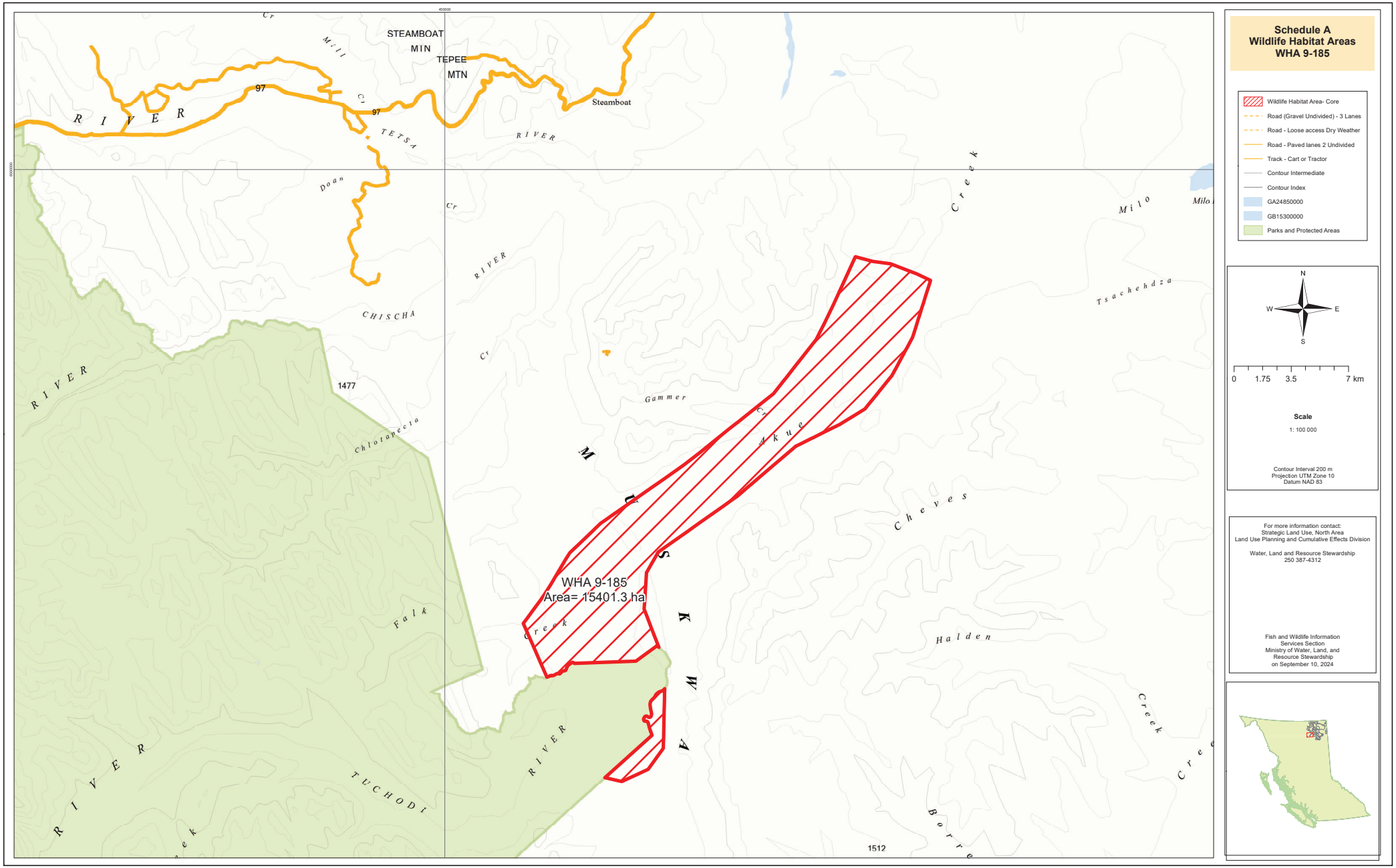
Schedule A

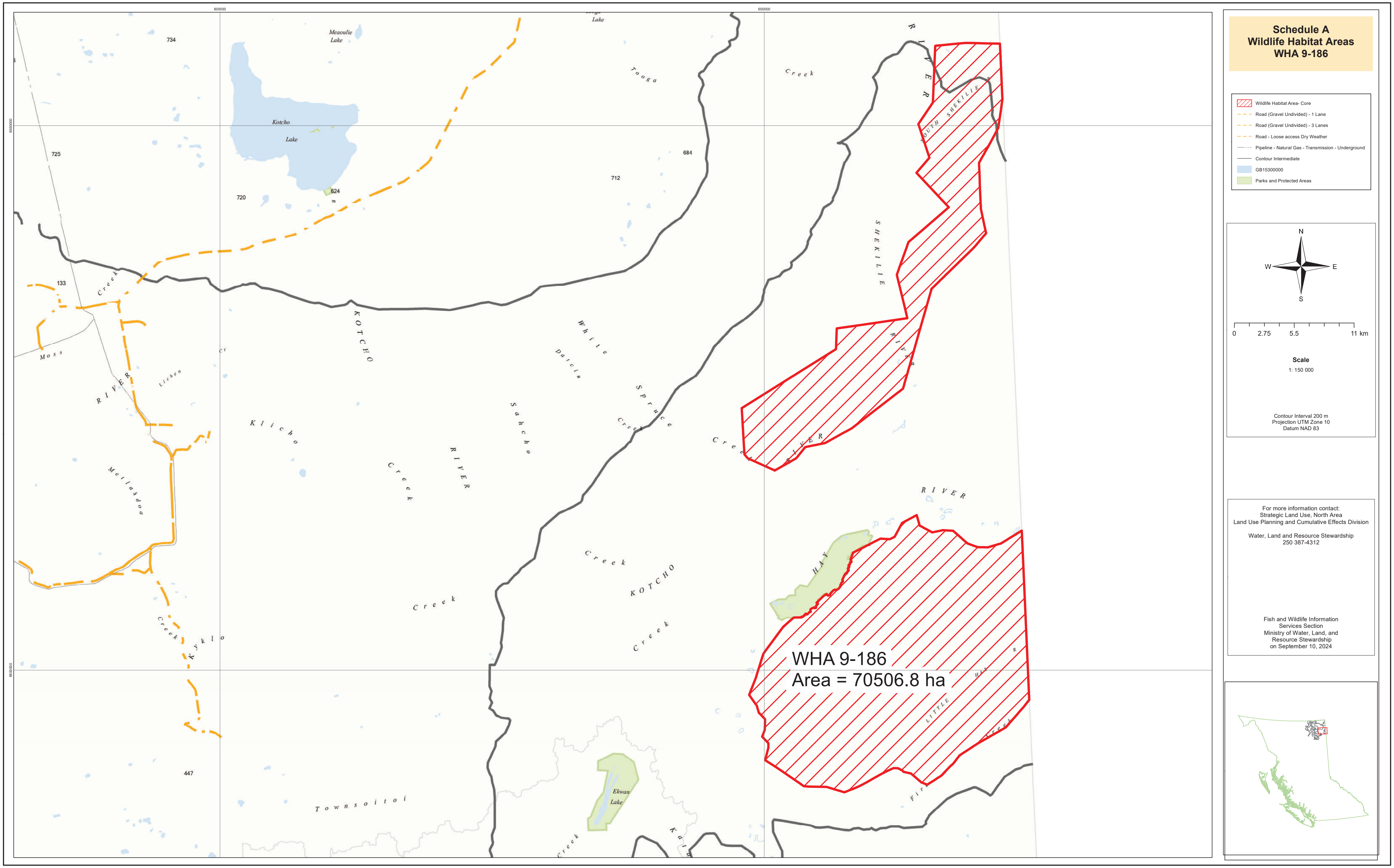

Schedule A
Wildlife Habitat Areas
WHA 9-181
Wildlife Habitat Area- Core
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 1 Lane
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 3 Lanes
Road - Loose access Dry Weather
Road (Winter Road)
Track - Cart or Tractor
Pipeline - Natural Gas - Transmission - Underground
Contour Intermediate
GA24850000
GB15300000
Parks and Protected Areas
WHA 9-181
Area= 532172 ha
N
W
E
S
0
4.5
9
18 km
Scale
1: 250 000
Contour Interval 200 m
Projection UTM Zone 10
Datum NAD 83
For more information contact:
Strategic Land Use, North Area
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
250 387-4312
Fish and Wildlife Information
Services Section
Ministry of Water, Land, and
Resource Stewardship
on September 10, 2024


WHA 9-182
Area= 476871.9
Schedule A
Wildlife Habitat Areas
WHA 9-182
Wildlife Habitat Area- Core
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 1 Lane
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 3 Lanes
Road - Loose access Dry Weather
Road (Winter Road)
Road - Paved lanes 2 Undivided
Track - Cart or Tractor
Bridge
Pipeline - Natural Gas - Transmission - Underground
Contour Intermediate
Contour Index
GA24850000
GB15300000
Parks and Protected Areas
N
W
E
S
0
4.5
9
18 km
Scale
1: 250 000
Contour Interval 200 m
Projection UTM Zone 10
Datum NAD 83
For more information contact:
Strategic Land Use, North Area
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
250 387-4312
Fish and Wildlife Information
Services Section
Ministry of Water, Land, and
Resource Stewardship
on September 10, 2024


Schedule A
Wildlife Habitat Areas
WHA 9-183
Wildlife Habitat Area- Core
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 1 Lane
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 3 Lanes
Road - Loose access Dry Weather
Road (Winter Road)
Road - Paved lanes 2 Undivided
Track - Cart or Tractor
Bridge
Rail Line (Single Track)
Pipeline - Natural Gas - Transmission - Underground
Pipeline - Underground
Contour Intermediate
Contour Index
GA24850000
GB15300000
Parks and Protected Areas
N
W
E
S
0
5
10
20 km
Scale
1: 350 000
Contour Interval 200 m
Projection UTM Zone 10
Datum NAD 83
For more information contact:
Strategic Land Use, North Area
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
250 387-4312
Fish and Wildlife Information
Services Section
Ministry of Water, Land, and
Resource Stewardship
on September 10, 2024
WHA 9-183
Area =
815530.4 ha


WHA 9-184
Area= 373114.1
Schedule A
Wildlife Habitat Areas
WHA 9-184
Wildlife Habitat Area- Core
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 1 Lane
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 3 Lanes
Road - Loose access Dry Weather
Road (Winter Road)
Road - Paved lanes 2 Undivided
Track - Cart or Tractor
Bridge
Rail Line (Single Track)
Pipeline - Natural Gas - Transmission - Underground
Pipeline - Underground
Contour Intermediate
Contour Index
GA24850000
GB15300000
Parks and Protected Areas
N
W
E
S
0 5 10 20 km
Scale
1: 300 000
Contour Interval 200 m
Projection UTM Zone 10
Datum NAD 83
For more information contact:
Strategic Land Use, North Area
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
250 387-4312
Fish and Wildlife Information
Services Section
Ministry of Water, Land, and
Resource Stewardship
on September 10, 2024


Schedule A
Wildlife Habitat Areas
WHA 9-185
Wildlife Habitat Area- Core
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 3 Lanes
Road - Loose access Dry Weather
Road - Paved lanes 2 Undivided
Track - Cart or Tractor
Contour Intermediate
Contour Index
GA24850000
GB15300000
Parks and Protected Areas
N
W
E
S
0 1.75 3.5 7 km
Scale
1: 100 000
Contour Interval 200 m
Projection UTM Zone 10
Datum NAD 83
For more information contact:
Strategic Land Use, North Area
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
250 387-4312
Fish and Wildlife Information
Services Section
Ministry of Water, Land, and
Resource Stewardship
on September 10, 2024
WHA 9-185
Area= 15401.3 ha
STEAMBOAT
MIN
TEPEE
MTN
Steamboat
RIVER
TETSA
CHISCHA
Chiotapecta
Falk
TUCHODI
Gammer
Akue
Cheves
Halden
Milo
Tsachehdza
Creek
1477
1512
97


Schedule A
Wildlife Habitat Areas
WHA 9-186
Wildlife Habitat Area- Core
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 1 Lane
Road (Gravel Undivided) - 3 Lanes
Road - Loose access Dry Weather
Pipeline - Natural Gas - Transmission - Underground
Contour Intermediate
GB15300000
Parks and Protected Areas
N
W
E
S
0
2.75
5.5
11 km
Scale
1: 150 000
Contour Interval 200 m
Projection UTM Zone 10
Datum NAD 83
For more information contact:
Strategic Land Use, North Area
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
250 387-4312
Fish and Wildlife Information
Services Section
Ministry of Water, Land, and
Resource Stewardship
on September 10, 2024
WHA 9-186
Area = 70506.8 ha
Kotcho
Lake
Meaoulie
Lake
Ekwan
Lake
KOTCHO
RIVER
SHEKILIE
HAY
Creek
White
Spruce
Sahcho
Klicho
Townsoitoi
Kyklo
Moss
Licken
Metlahdoa
Tooga
734
725
720
624
712
684
133
447
600000
650000

Schedule B

Part 1: Definitions

1. Unless otherwise specified, words and expressions not defined in this order have the meaning given to them under the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA).

2. In this Order and the schedules to this Order:

   Forest Cover: forest stands or cover types consisting of a plant community made up of trees and other woody vegetation, as determined in the latest Vegetation Resources Inventory (VRI).

   Livestock Attractants: nutritional supplements, feed and artificial mineral licks intended for livestock.

   Terrestrial Lichen Habitat: areas as assessed and mapped by a Qualified Environmental Professional using '*A Guide to Evaluating Forest Stands as Terrestrial Lichen Forage Habitat for Caribou*' (MELP, 2000)

   Wetland: land saturated by water, permanently or intermittently, for a long enough time that the excess water and resulting low oxygen levels produce conditions where aquatic plants grow and other biological activity adapted to a wet environment occurs.

Part 2: Establishment of wildlife habitat areas

1. With respect to wildlife habitat areas (WHA) 9-181, 9-182, 9-183, 9-184, 9-185 and 9-186:

   a) The areas shown in the maps set out in the attached Schedule A (Medzih 9-181, 9-82, 9-183, 9-184, 9-185 and 9-186) and contained in the WHA spatial layer stored in the BC Geographic Warehouse (WHSE_WILDLIFE_MANAGEMENT.WCP_WILDLIFE_HABITAT_ AREA_POLY*)* are Medzih 9-181, 9-182, 9-183, 9-184, 9-185 and 9-186 for woodland caribou. The centre points of the lines on the attached Schedule A are what establish the WHA boundaries.

   b) If there is a discrepancy between the areas shown on the map attached as Schedule A and the WHA spatial layer stored in the British Columbia Geographic Warehouse (WHSE_WILDLIFE_MANAGEMENT.WCP_WILDLIFE_HABITAT_AREA_P OLY), the areas as detailed in the WHA spatial layer will take precedent.

Part 3: General Wildlife Measures (GWMs)

The following measures are established for Medzih 9-181 to 9-186:

Primary Forest Activities

1. Do not construct new roads or access structures.
2. No improvement or extension of existing roads or access structures.
3. No harvesting activities.
4. Silviculture treatments and wildlife enhancement activities must not result in the removal of Forest Cover.
5. Silviculture treatments and wildlife enhancement activities must not result in the conversion of Terrestrial Lichen Habitat or Wetland areas to forb or graminoid cover.

Range

6. No new range developments, as defined in FRPA.
7. No Livestock Attractants.
8. No grazing of domestic sheep, goats, or camelids.
9. Range practices must not cause the conversion of Terrestrial Lichen Habitats or Wetland areas to forb or graminoid cover.

Chemical Applications

10. Do not use pesticides, except for the application of herbicides to control invasive plants or noxious weeds.

Additional Requirements

11. Forest Cover identification for purposes pertaining to this order must be carried out by a Qualified Environmental Professional.
12. Wetland identification for purposes pertaining to this order must be carried out by a Qualified Environmental Professional.

Supporting Guidance Document
for Forest and Range Practices Act, Government Action Regulation
Medzih (boreal caribou) Wildlife Habitat Area Legal Order

Preamble

The following information in the Supporting Guidance Document is intended to provide background information to statutory decision makers and interested proponents, and to support the establishment of the Medzih WHA Legal Order. The Supporting Guidance Document is not part of the legal order and instead provides additional information as to its scope and intentions.

THE INTENTION OF THE MEDZIH WHA LEGAL ORDER IS TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE CARIBOU HABITAT WITHIN THE BOREAL CARIBOU PROTECTION AND RECOVERY PLAN AREA, IN SUPPORT OF GROWING THE HERDS TO SELF SUSTAINING LEVELS THAT WILL SUPPORT INDIGENOUS SUSTENANCE HARVEST IN LINE WITH TREATY RIGHTS.

Background

Medzih is a Dene word for caribou. In this document, it is used interchangeably with boreal caribou (*Rangifer tarandus* caribou). It is recognized that there are many different Indigenous words and different dialects used for caribou and boreal caribou.

This initiative aims to protect critical caribou core habitat, covering a total area of 2,282,596 hectares within the Fort Nelson timber supply areas (TSA). Caribou habitat zones are the foundation for the habitat management strategy within the Boreal Caribou Recovery and Protection Plan, 2025 (BCPRP). Core caribou habitat zones represent the most critical habitat within the ranges containing the biophysical attributes required by caribou to carry out life processes necessary for survival and recovery (BC, 2025). Caribou core habitat zones incorporate both scientific information (habitat suitability, telemetry data from radio collared caribou) and Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge of caribou distribution and habitat use (BC, 2025).

The BCPRP focuses on four caribou herd ranges in Northeastern BC (Calendar, Maxhamish, Snake-Sahtaneh, and West-side Fort Nelson). Each caribou herd range is further broken up into habitat management types from 1 to 4. The Medzih WHA informs management directives on habitat management types 1 and 2 (Figure 1). Management types 1 and 2 are critically important to the long-term sustainability and recovery of boreal caribou. Management types 1 and 2 include important caribou core habitat areas. Core habitat zones are the foundation for the habitat management strategy within the BCPRP. Core habitat zones incorporate both scientific information (habitat suitability, telemetry data from radio collared boreal caribou) and Indigenous knowledge of caribou distribution and habitat use. Core zones represent the most important habitat within the ranges containing the biophysical attributes required by caribou to carry out life processes

necessary for survival and recovery. Areas outside of core zones and within caribou range are classified as matrix habitat. Matrix habitat possesses low periodic caribou use and is important for connectivity between suitable core habitats. Predator-prey dynamics in these areas have the potential to significantly impact caribou populations both directly and indirectly. Types 3 and 4 encompass caribou matrix habitat and are not a component of this legal order but have been mentioned as they are a component of the greater BCPRP.

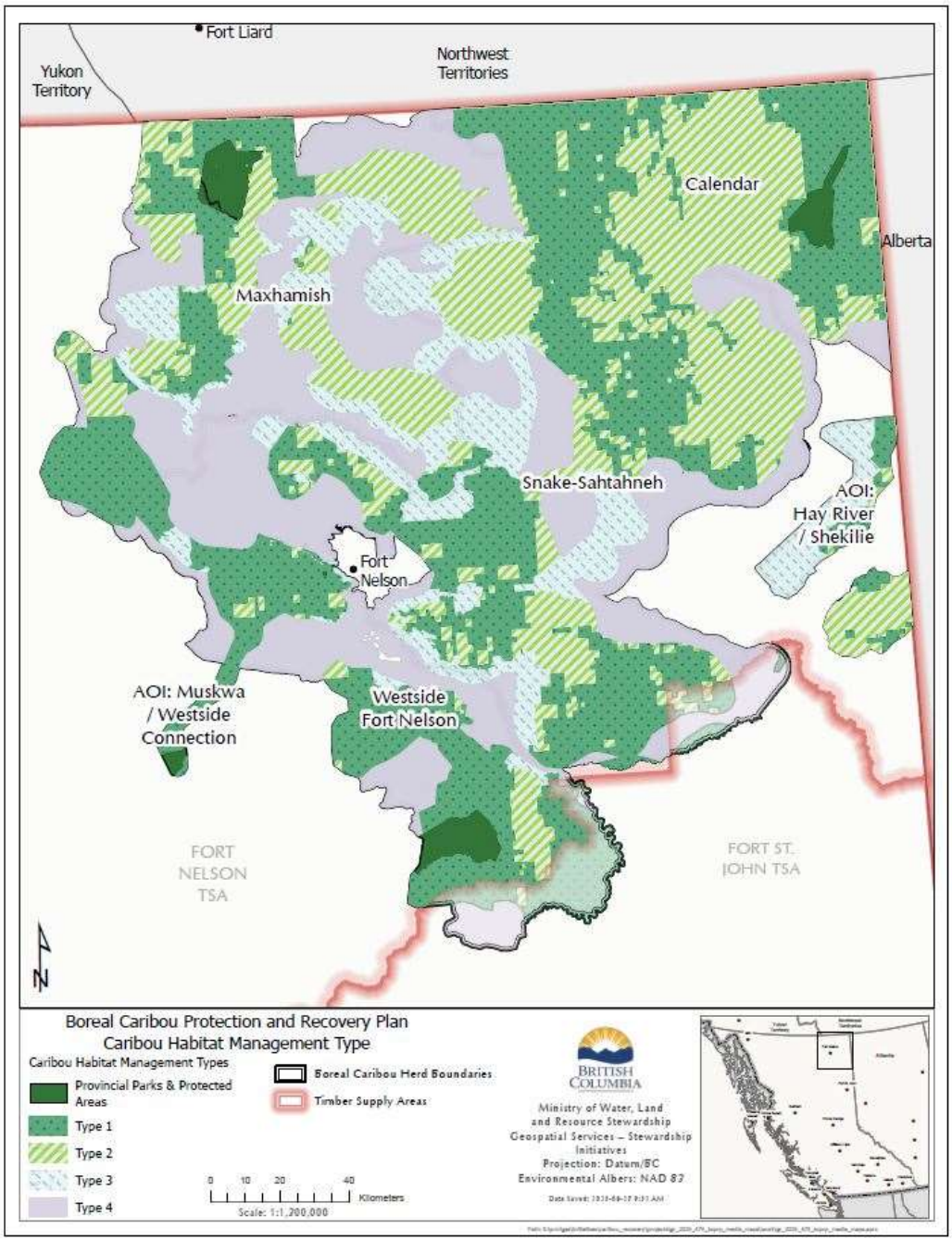


Figure 1. Boreal Caribou herd range map in northeastern BC with the outlined management types 1 and 2.

Critical habitat, as defined by SARA (Canada, 2002), is "the habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed wildlife species and that is identified as the species' critical habitat in the recovery strategy or action plan for the species." According to the Government of Canada (2023), woodland caribou utilize old-growth conifer stands with established lichen communities in winter and may feed on younger forest stands in summer. These caribou prefer peatlands and generally avoid clearcuts, shrub-rich habitats, and deciduous-dominant sites. In simpler terms "boreal caribou depend on large, undisturbed areas for food resources, reproductive success, and protection from predators" which aligns with the primary considerations on management type 1 and 2 delineations (BC, 2025). If an area does not appear to align with the stated critical habitat types, it is crucial to acknowledge that the habitat still remains vital for caribou and must be managed accordingly.

General Wildlife Measures (GWM) are established for the Medzih WHA's (Wildlife Habitat Areas) within habitat management types 1 and 2 with the commitment that management directives will be reassessed, at minimum, every five years. These orders may also require reassessment or amendment at the conclusion of the Liard Water and Land Stewardship planning process, or based on new information or habitat impacts (i.e. catastrophic wildfire). Management of type 3 and 4 areas is outside the scope of the orders at this time and will be confirmed through the Liard Water and Land Stewardship Forum (LWLSF) or other relevant landscape level planning initiatives. These orders are designed to align with forest management objectives agreed by BC and Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) for management types 1 and 2, which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Management directives for management types 1 and 2 agreed to in the BCPRP (forestry activities context).

Type	Management Intent	Management Measures
1	● Full habitat protection across all industries ● Top restoration priority	● No new subsurface and surface tenure disposition ● No new surface disturbances ● Reclamation and restoration of legacy disturbance permitted through appropriate regulatory mechanisms
2	● Full protection from forest harvest ● Secondary restoration priority	● No new subsurface and surface tenure disposition ● No new surface disturbance ● Reclamation and restoration of legacy disturbance permitted through appropriate regulatory mechanisms

The locations of the Medzih WHA's are depicted in and can also be accessed through the WHA order provincial layers. In cases of discrepancies between this document and the publicly available geospatial layer, the geospatial layer will take precedence.

Implementation of Medzih WHA Orders

Objective:

The objective of the Medzih WHA legal orders is to implement measures to protect and recover boreal caribou habitat in types 1 and 2 that are consistent with the management directives endorsed by BC's Environmental Land Use Committee (ELUC) as outlined in the BCPRP. The Order applies to forestry activities in the type 1 and type 2 Management Areas of the BCPRP that are intended to support the recovery of boreal caribou populations.

The General Wildlife Measures associated with the Medzih WHA are the results of the commitments made within the BCPRP. The BCPRP intends to:

- "*Recover boreal caribou populations across their range to self-sustaining status and to a level capable of supporting an Indigenous sustenance harvest.*"

The above goal is consistent with Environment and Climate Change Canada's Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy recovery goal to achieve self-sustaining local populations in all the ranges across Canada. In pursuit of this goal, the Province's objectives related to caribou habitat and populations for the BCPRP were to:

- "*Establish a positive habitat trend within caribou habitat zones by maintaining conditions of the best remaining habitat and improving the condition of currently degraded habitat.*"
- "*Stabilize and achieve a positive population trend across all ranges.*"

The intention of this order is to support the BCPRP goal of stabilizing and achieving a positive habitat trend by limiting new anthropogenic disturbance within important caribou habitat areas.

Application Guidelines

The exemption process for *Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) Government Actions Regulation (GAR)* legal orders is well documented and available in the enclosed document and request form. As per the regulation, all forest and range licensees must comply with the General Wildlife Measures (GWMs) that apply within the designated area. A proponent may apply for an exemption to the applicable GWMs, but a decision is under the authority of the Minister responsible for the Wildlife Act (WLRS). An exemption may be granted in instances where the intent of the GWM can still be met or where the application of GWM is not practicable (cannot be achieved) due to circumstances that were not considered or known at the time of the designation. In cases where an exemption to a GWM is provided, conditions may also be included which are legally binding to the proponent.

Proponents seeking to gain an exemption to the General Wildlife Measures outlined in the Order must submit an application to the Regional Director of Resource Stewardship Operations with the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship. (*https://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frpa/iwms/regional_rare_and_endangered.htm*) At a minimum,

application packages should contain a detailed description of proposed works including project timing, a management plan containing information on current site conditions and proposed mitigations, and spatial data and/or mapping products. Any submitted exemption application should include the following information:

- An identification of which GWM the project activities will conflict with and why an exemption is required;
- An assessment of the current conditions within the project area;
- A detailed description of all project measures designed to avoid, minimize, mitigate, and offset potential impacts to caribou;
    - This may include a description of measures that were considered and ultimately deemed impractical.
- Quantification of the residual impacts of the proposed activities on caribou and caribou habitat following all mitigation measures;
    - This includes direct and indirect impacts to both caribou and habitat over the project's lifespan and over the long term.
- Identification of how project impacts to caribou and caribou habitat will be measured and monitored over time;
- Where offsetting is proposed as a mitigation measure, the application package must include:
    - A detailed description of the proposed offsetting site or method and its relative value to caribou in comparison to the impact;
    - An assessment of the area proposed for offsetting
    - An assessment of how the proposed offsetting methods will result in a net benefit to caribou and caribou habitat, with outcomes directly linked to project impacts;
    - Information on how the offsetting program will be guaranteed by the proponent, including any agreements that the offsetting is subject to;
- Sign off by an appropriate Qualified Environmental Professional (i.e. RPBio, RPF, PAg, etc.) depending on the scope of proposed activities.

Note that GWM exemption applications may be bundled with activity applications submitted to FrontCounter BC. (*https://portalext.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/-/log-in)* Incomplete application packages will result in requests for additional information, which may impact the timeline to receive a decision.

Assessments of potential impacts, mitigation strategies and potential offsets should be directly linked to caribou needs and ecological processes. The following table is a demonstration of indicators that can inform project impacts and mitigation measures but should not be considered an exhaustive list.

Caribou Values	Indicator
Condition and Abundance of Habitat	Proportion of disturbed habitat
	Connectivity of undisturbed habitat within range and between ranges
	Impacts to predator efficiency
Population Structure and Dynamics	Density of Primary Prey species
	Density of predator species
	Caribou calf survival
	Caribou population size

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTENT OF THE GWMS. THIS INFORMATION IS INTENDED TO GUIDE PROPONENTS SEEKING EXEMPTIONS TO ALIGN WITH THE INTENT OF THE GWMS, AS WELL AS DECISION MAKERS REVIEWING EXEMPTION REQUEST APPLICATIONS.

General Wildlife Measures related to Primary Forest Activities

Habitat Condition

The long-term habitat goal for BCPRP caribou herds is to reduce overall disturbance to a level that supports self-sustaining caribou populations. While habitat protections provide for the natural regeneration of disturbance in core habitat areas and safeguard investments for further restoration efforts, it is recognized that habitat protection does not immediately equate to intact habitat. Given the long-term time-lag for natural recovery of disturbances, progress towards the disturbance targets will need to be measured consistently to gauge the need for active restoration or further measures.

In the 2016 SARA guidelines for Woodland Caribou, Boreal population, it is identified that 65% undisturbed habitat within a herd range is required to have a measurable probability of returning caribou to a self-sustaining population. Currently the land base within the Boreal herd ranges are far below this habitat metric. These habitat protections, along with habitat restoration and enhancement activities, are designed to mee the disturbance targets within a 40 year time frame. The ecosystems in northeastern BC are highly susceptible to disturbance and may require many decades to recover to a semi-functional state capable of sustaining healthy caribou populations. The implementation of the

Medzih WHA is a large step towards the provincial, indigenous and federal government's commitments to Boreal Caribou recovery as was detailed in the BCPRP.

The BCPRP is based on the key principle of habitat protection as a means of preventing further habitat degradation, which is why protection is focused on the most intact habitat. Although it is anticipated that disturbances within restrictive management types will naturally regenerate, active restoration efforts will be required in core management areas to ensure habitat targets are achieved over the long-term.

The point at which a disturbance is sufficiently recovered to be considered undisturbed habitat is a crucial factor for monitoring habitat trend. As part of BCPRP implementation, the characteristics that determine undisturbed habitat will be defined and incorporated into a monitoring program. These characteristics and criteria will be refined over the course of an effectiveness monitoring program and be responsive to site-specific observations.

Considerations for access structures

Linear anthropogenic features within caribou habitats significantly disrupt caribou population dynamics through multiple ecological pathways. These features lead to habitat fragmentation, reset ecological successional stages, facilitate primary prey species establishment, alter predator-prey dynamics, hinder the re-establishment of stable ecosystem states, and introduce invasive species (DeMars et al. 2019; Orbán et al. 2021). The intention of GWM's 1 "Do not construct new roads or access structures" and 2 "No improvement or extension of existing roads or access structures" is to reduce the total amount of linear disturbance within caribou habitat by not creating new roads within the Medzih WHA, and by reducing activities that will increase the lifespan of existing linear disturbances.

Further to GWM 2: improvements are considered as works designed to increase the permanency of an access structure such as upgrading from a snow road to all-season access or converting a one season road to a 5-year road. Routine maintenance activities and remedial actions on existing roads are not considered to be improvements and are not subject to this GWM. Extension to a road is considered to be any widening or lengthening of access structures beyond their originally approved right of way area.

An exemption from the appropriate GWM is required in cases where a new access structure or improvements to an existing access structure are required to facilitate the deactivation of existing roads, habitat restoration work, or other silviculture activities. In such cases, the activity can only be considered as aligning with the GWMs if it results in:

A. A net decrease in habitat disturbance due to a greater area being restored than is being disturbed, or;
B. Accelerated deactivation and restoration of the access structure compared to baseline conditions.

When new access structures are approved by exemption, they should be designed to minimize their impact on caribou habitat and reduce their disturbance lifespan as much as possible. Below are examples of design and implementation considerations that help achieve these goals. Note that this is not an exhaustive list of potential mitigation strategies:

- **Minimizing Impact:** Access structures should be as narrow as the activities allow. Where feasible, design them to limit line of sight by incorporating turns, visual screening, and using natural breaks in the terrain.
- **Preserving Natural Features:** When establishing new linear features or reactivating old ones, maintain standing trees to support natural succession post-disturbance. Avoid soil compaction and, as practical, disturbance to the ground surface layers including microtopography during preparation to preserve soil structure, and minimize disruption to existing plant communities, including stems, seeds, and the soil profile. These measures help prevent the area from shifting into an alternative or undesired recovery path.
- **Decommissioning and Restoration:** After decommissioning linear features, restoration should be carried out using effective techniques such as the 'rough and loose' soil adjustment method (Polster, 2013), and creation of microtopography. This method controls erosion, promotes revegetation, limits human access, and fosters natural succession. Restoration should use native species reflective of surrounding healthy plant communities. For more details, refer to "Making Sites Rough and Loose: A Soil Adjustment Technique" (Polster, 2013).
- **Monitoring and Inspection:** After restoration, the applicant must monitor the site for at least five years, or until the site is on track to meet restoration goals, to ensure success. The authority that granted the exemption retains the right to inspect the site and assess the effectiveness of the restoration. If necessary, the applicant may be required to make adjustments to ensure the site progresses towards the desired ecosystem state.

Considerations for Harvest

The intention of this Medzih WHA is to have no timber harvesting activities, as specified in GWM 3 "No harvesting activities". Timber harvesting and salvaging activities pose significant risk to caribou recovery promoting the stressors listed prior in this document. Wildfire and pest impacts have been significant stressors throughout British Columbia, sparking considerable interest in salvaging timber for commercial use. Exemptions for the salvage harvest of dead timber resulting from severe natural disturbance should only be considered as meeting the intent of the GWM if it can be shown that the harvest operations will result in a net benefit to available caribou habitat as opposed to taking no action. Examples of considerations that could lead to aligning with the intent include:

- Salvage harvest operations that allow for reduced disturbance in other areas of high-quality caribou habitat outside of established protections (i.e. deferred harvesting).

- Harvest operations that remove a hazardous condition for caribou (i.e. increased flood risk, invasive species, etc.).

For the purpose of exemption applications, the following general guidance is provided to lower the potential impacts from harvest applications that are deemed to meet the intent of the GWMs:

- Minimize harvest of healthy and standing trees, maximizing retention.
- Prior to development, plan for accelerated deactivation and restoration.
- Does not alter the seral state to undesired conditions. I.e. coniferous to deciduous or lichen understory to graminoid or forb.
- Minimize the need for new or upgraded access structures.
- Avoid impacts to wetland soils and vegetation.
- Avoid impacts to peatlands.

Silviculture Treatments and Wildlife Enhancement Activities

Silviculture treatments are activities designed to promote the growth and management of trees to meet BC's resource management objectives (BC, 2024) and include activities such as site preparation for the purposes of reforestation, planting trees, and associated activities. Wildlife enhancement activities are similar in scope but are undertaken to promote wildlife habitat needs rather than silviculture objectives. These terms are often used interchangeably, as the activities are closely aligned. Habitat restoration activities typically fall into this category.

GWMs 4 and 5 apply to silviculture treatments and wildlife enhancement activities:

- GWM 4: "Silviculture treatments and wildlife enhancement activities must not result in the removal of Forest Cover."
- GWM 5: "Silviculture treatments and wildlife enhancement activities must not result in the conversion of Terrestrial Lichen Habitat or Wetland areas to forb or graminoid cover."

The intention of these GWMs is to allow for activities that will increase the availability and quality of caribou habitat within the order area to meet the overall habitat targets of the BCPRP, while avoiding the conversion of core caribou habitat into habitat that would attract and support primary prey species (i.e. increased forb and graminoid cover or early seral habitat). The implementation of the Medzih WHA legal order does not negate any existing silviculture commitments imposed prior.

Proposed activities that will result in the removal of forest cover will require an application for exemption. Activities will be considered as aligning with the GWMs where:

- The removed forest cover is being used for functional habitat restoration (i.e. line blocking or similar), or;

- The removal is necessary for operational purposes, and the resulting activity results in a net benefit to caribou habitat.
- The removal of a species such as deciduous trees with the purpose of promoting coniferous dominance of a stand. The felled trees would then be left on site as coarse woody debris (CWD).

Exemption applications for silviculture treatments or wildlife enhancement activities that do not align with the GWMs should be prepared by a Qualified Environmental Professional and clearly demonstrate how the proposed activity will improve the quality and/or quantity of caribou habitat above the current condition resulting in a net positive for caribou habitat. Activities designed to improve caribou habitat should be site specific and tied to the desired habitat outcome.

The following are provided as examples of considerations that can improve caribou habitat metrics, though it should not be considered an exhaustive list:

- Species Composition
    - Prescription is conifer-leading.
    - Excludes agronomic species.
    - Plans for lichen understory establishment.
    - Remove or inhibit the establishment of invasive species.
- Site preparation
    - Rough and loose technique (Polster. 2013).
    - Coarse woody debris should be maintained on site and spread out or in slash piles.
    - Standing dead trees should be left standing as wildlife habitat trees, if possible.
    - Wildfire risk reduction activities such as reduction of fuel load as outlined below.
    - Access corridors should be blocked off following decommissioning.

Considerations for Wildfire Risk Reduction

Wildfire risk reduction strategies are practices designed to reduce the potential severity and intensity of unwanted wildfires on values at risk (Gov BC, 2023). Infrastructure such as homes, oil and gas facilities, telecommunication networks, and electrical facilities are susceptible to wildfire and may be damaged or destroyed if exposed to it. Wildfire risk reduction involves proactively altering forests adjacent to infrastructures to minimize the severity of wildfire impacts on human values and infrastructure. Common wildfire risk reduction practices include thinning, prescribed fire, cultural burning, and understory fuel management (Gov BC, 2024). Wildfire risk reduction activities are generally considered to be silviculture treatments, and as such GWMs 4 and 5 apply as per above.

Wildfire reduction strategies are most commonly used to protect human interests. However, these strategies can potentially reduce the size and intensity of future fires within caribou habitat, protecting stand composition without altering the seral state. As

such, wildfire risk reduction activities can be considered as promoting suitable caribou habitat and aligning with the intention of the order, provided they align with the GWMs.

When considering utilizing the thinning risk reduction practice the trees targeted should not be mature trees which provide good ecological value but rather the younger or less desirable trees (typically deciduous). The trees which are felled should be left on site as CWD, or placed into slash piles for future burning, or turned into chips and removed from the site. The felled trees through the thinning practice of wildfire management are not intended for commercial timber use.

The creation of new roads or the improvements to existing roads within the order area is to be avoided for wildfire risk management. If access is required, refer to the 'Considerations for access/linear features' section above.

Cultural Burning and Prescribed Fire

Cultural burning is a practice implemented by indigenous peoples since time immemorial as a way to revitalize landscapes for ecological benefit. Fires would be started in the spring season to promote the growth of plants and increase forage opportunities for local wildlife (FNFN, 2019).

Prescribed fires can be undertaken for a number of reasons, most commonly to promote forage opportunity for wildlife, or to remove unwanted understory species and promote natural regeneration. Prescribed fires can also be designed as a wildfire risk reduction activity. The intentions for prescribed fire activities mirror the intentions for silviculture practices and wildlife enhancement activity. In instances where a proposed prescribed fire would result in the removal of mature forest cover, an exemption request will be required. Prescribed fire will be considered as aligning with the intents of the GWMs if the resulting habitat condition will result in a net benefit to caribou (i.e. removal of agronomic species, wildfire risk reduction, etc.).

Prescribed fire for the purposes of increasing forage for ungulate species other than caribou within the order area are not aligned with the intention of the GWMs and thus would require an exemption.

Consideration for small tenure requests

Small tenure requests within this guidance document refer to developments under 50ha such as gravel pits, wind energy, work camps, etc. When proposing a development within the Medzih WHA, which does not align with the GWM, the following should be considered, related to proposed development activities:

- Must not negatively impact caribou habitat and must result in a net positive impact to caribou habitat.

- Does not alter the seral state to undesired conditions in the surrounding areas. I.e. coniferous to deciduous or lichen understory to graminoid or forb.
- No new access features should be proposed, and existing access features should not be upgraded.
- Does not occur where wetland soil or vegetation are present.
- Does not occur in peatlands.
- Plans for accelerated restoration developed to minimize the area impacted.
- Restoration plans in place for site deactivation to achieve desirable site conditions for caribou recovery.
- The attributes that make the site desirable for development are not reasonably available elsewhere.

Considerations for Range

The intention of GWM 7. “No Livestock Attractants” is to prevent the congregation of ungulates as a result of a livestock attractant, which can increase risk of disease proliferation among ungulate populations. Exemption applications for the use of livestock attractants should clearly demonstrate how it will not result in increased congregation of ungulate species. Suitable mitigations may include fencing, supervision of attractant sites, or limiting free feeding.

The intention of GWM 8. “No grazing of domestic sheep, goats, or camelids” is to prevent the potential for Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae and other disease transfer from these species into wild caribou populations.

The intention of GWM 9 “Range practices must not cause the conversion of Terrestrial Lichen Habitats or Wetland areas to forb or graminoid cover” is to prevent the transition of suitable caribou habitat to other plant communities, in line with direction provided above for primary forest activities.

Closing

The establishment of Medzih WHA's marks a significant milestone in this journey, highlighting the commitment to preserving critical habitat and restoring populations to sustainable levels. This collaborative effort not only reflects BC’s dedication to the BCPRP but also acknowledges the cultural and ecological importance of these caribou to Indigenous communities like FNFN. By continuing to prioritize habitat protection and restoration, BC aims to create a future where boreal caribou thrive and Indigenous sustenance harvesting can be sustained once again.

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