
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007AL0050-001308
Oct. 16, 2007

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Integrated Land Management Bureau

UNIQUE COLLABORATION TO RECOVER MOUNTAIN CARIBOU

VICTORIA – Representatives from conservation organizations, the forest industry and outdoor recreation organizations joined Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell today in announcing a partnership that will recover British Columbia’s mountain caribou to sustainable numbers.

“Today’s announcement comes as a result of years of collaborative work to reach agreement on how best to approach mountain caribou recovery,” said Bell. “I particularly commend the Mountain Caribou Project for their significant contributions to this process. For the past three years, they have been deeply involved in building this collaborative solution, and we all look forward to its implementation on the ground.

“Based on our consultations and the recommendations of the independent Mountain Caribou Science Team, we are working together in this historic collaborative approach to implement a balanced and effective plan that will succeed in recovering mountain caribou in this province to sustainable numbers.”

The plan’s goal is to restore the mountain caribou population to the pre-1995 level of 2,500 animals throughout their existing range in B.C. The Province will provide \$1,000,000 per year for three years to support adaptive management plans.

The following actions will be taken to achieve the overall goal:

- Protect 2.2 million hectares of mountain caribou range from logging and road building, capturing 95 per cent of the caribou’s high suitability winter habitat. This will lead to a growth of approximately 380,000 hectares of protected forest within mountain caribou range.
- Manage human recreational activities in mountain caribou habitat in a manner that ensures critical habitat areas are effectively protected.
- Manage predator populations of wolf and cougar where they are preventing the recovery of mountain caribou populations.
- Manage the primary prey of caribou predators.
- Boost caribou numbers in threatened herds with animals transplanted from elsewhere to ensure herds achieve critical mass for self-sufficiency.
- Support adaptive management and research and implement effective monitoring plans for habitat, recreation and predator-prey management.
- Institute a cross-sector progress board in spring 2008 to monitor the effectiveness of recovery actions.

“I would like to recognize the provincial government for working with the Simpcw First Nation on recovering mountain caribou herds,” said Chief Keith Matthew of the Simpcw First Nation. “We’re looking forward to finalizing and implementing agreements on our participation.”

“We firmly believe that together we can protect values such as mountain caribou while ensuring the economic stability of the forest sector and the many families and communities that depend upon it,” said John Allan, president and CEO of the Council of Forest Industries. “We congratulate the government on the progress to date and look forward to working together to not only provide further protection for caribou but to also maintaining the many community benefits of a vibrant forest sector.”

“The British Columbia Snowmobile Federation, in co-operation with the provincial government and several external groups, has helped manage areas for mountain caribou for many years,” said Les Austin, general manager of the BC Snowmobile Federation. “Today we continue to support efforts to recover mountain caribou in British Columbia while still ensuring our snowmobiling opportunities.”

B.C.’s mountain caribou are globally unique, as they are the world’s southernmost population and the only remaining population that lives in rugged, mountainous terrain. All other similar populations that existed throughout the world are now extirpated. Mountain caribou in B.C. have declined from approximately 2,500 individuals in 1995 to about 1,900 individuals in 12 herds today.

“The decline in mountain caribou did not happen overnight, and neither will the recovery,” added Bell. “It will take several generations of mountain caribou before they reach pre-1995 levels. However, together with our partners, we are committed to doing whatever it takes, including relocating mountain caribou from stronger herds to augment herds at risk, as recommended by the Science Team. As we move ahead on the relocation process, we will continue to work in co-operation with First Nations and other stakeholders.”

“As a participant in the SaRCO process for the preservation of mountain caribou in British Columbia, the Association of British Columbia Snowmobile Clubs has been pleased to work in a co-operative manner as part of the team,” said Terry Watt, president of the Association of BC Snowmobile Clubs. “We will continue to support this process through a concerted effort to inform the snowmobiling community as to its importance through the resources available to us.”

-30-

To view a map of mountain caribou distribution in B.C. and mountain caribou photos, visit:
www.mediaroom.gov.bc.ca/DisplayEventDetails.aspx?eventId=394

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media Liz Bicknell
contact: Communications Director
 Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
 250 356-2862
 250 213-3072 (cell)

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at www.gov.bc.ca.