

**Ethier, Tom FLNR:EX**

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**From:** Wenham, Logan GCPE:EX  
**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2014 12:57 PM  
**To:** Ethier, Tom FLNR:EX  
**Cc:** s.15,s.19  
**Subject:** REVIEW/APPROVE: updates to the MCRIP IN  
**Attachments:** IN\_MntCaribou Recovery Implementation Plan\_sept2014\_draft6.docx

Hi Tom:

In preparation for the return of the Legislature, I'm updating some issues notes, including the attached one on the MCRIP. It is based off the note from earlier in this year, updated with recent events s.15,s.19 have previously reviewed/approved. I also got s.15,s.19 to give it a look on the F&W side of things and he provided some edits.

Can you please review/approve?

Many thanks in advance!

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## ADVICE TO MINISTER

### CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural  
Resource Operations  
Updated: Sept. 18, 2014  
Minister Responsible: Hon. Steve Thomson

# Mountain Caribou: Recovery Implementation Plan (MCRIP)

#### ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- This government is committed to our efforts to recover Mountain Caribou to pre-1995 levels of more than 2,500 animals by 2027. Government and non-governmental agencies are working to implement all aspects of the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan.
- Since 2007, the province has prohibited industrial road building and logging, recreational snowmobiling and the sale of commercial recreation tenures on millions of hectares to protect and preserve caribou habitat.
- This is an ongoing effort and requires long-term careful management of public and commercial recreation, habitat protection, and predator and prey management.
- Other efforts to recover populations include a maternal penning project near Revelstoke, a 2012 transplant from Dease Lake to the South Purcells and a proposed captive breeding program in partnership with the Calgary Zoo, University of Calgary and Parks Canada.

#### If asked about the maternal penning project:

- This project in the Revelstoke area places caribou in fencing to protect pregnant cows and newborn calves from predators when at their most vulnerable) to increase caribou calf survival.
- Although the project has just completed its first release, early results are very promising, with no reported fatalities to date.
- There is a similar project in the Peace region in support of Northern caribou.
- Planning is underway to undertake both projects again in 2015.

#### If asked about predator management and aerial wolf removal:

- The province's Wolf Management Plan supports a two-zone strategy, which allows for increased management where wolf predation threatens mountain caribou recovery.
- Any future actions on wolf management will be made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the principles laid out in the Wolf Management Plan.

### If asked about the transfer of caribou to the South Purcell herd

- In March 2012, 20 caribou were moved from an area near Dease Lake to the Kootenay region to augment the Purcells-South mountain caribou herd. This herd had an existing population of only 14 animals and direct action needed to be taken to prevent the herd being eliminated.
- Although we were expecting there would be deaths, given the stress to the animals and the unfamiliar surroundings, we are obviously disappointed with the high level of mortality.
- We are learning a great deal about the movement of the released caribou from this initial transfer and that knowledge will inform our future decisions. The project is being refined to hopefully deliver stronger results, with a proposed completion in 2015. The project will receive a critical independent review to ensure it remains a viable tool to use in the MCRIP

### **KEY FACTS REGARDING THE ISSUE:**

There are approximately 1,500 mountain caribou distributed throughout British Columbia from the U.S. border north to Prince George. This population has been in decline since 1995, and is listed as threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), and red-listed (threatened) in B.C.

In response, the Government approved the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan (MCRIP) in October 2007. The goal of the MCRIP is to halt the decline of the mountain caribou population and recover the population to pre-1995 levels of more than 2,500 animals by 2027.

The Ministry's 2014/15 service plan includes a performance measure to ensure there are 14 herds in recovery by 2014/15, which would indicate the decline in herds has stopped.

Since 2007, the Government has initiated a number of measures in support of this goal, including:

- Roughly 2.2 million hectares of identified mountain caribou habitat has been prohibited for road building and logging.
- Certain forest-related activities associated with heli- and cat-skiing and mineral exploration are subject to guidelines developed specifically for those sectors.
- Over 1 million hectares of identified mountain caribou habitat has been closed to recreational snowmobile use.
- Government established 12 Stewardship Management Agreements (SMAs) areas with local clubs to manage snowmobile activity in mountain caribou habitat and is implementing a snowmobile compliance and effectiveness monitoring program.
- Herd augmentation programs, including the transfer of caribou to the Purcells-South herd, the development of a captive breeding program in partnership with Parks Canada and the Calgary Zoo, and a maternal penning trial in the Revelstoke area.

Predator-management activities form a part of the overall MCRIP. Measures include:

- Predators (cougar and wolf) are being actively managed by hunting and trapping. The Provincial Wolf Management Plan allows for increased wolf management where wolf predation threatens caribou recovery.
- A research project with University of Victoria has started that will examine wolf pack movement and predation risk in the vicinity of the Purcell South caribou herd.

### Mountain Caribou Recovery Progress Board

As part of the MCRIP, the stakeholder led Mountain Caribou Recovery Progress Board provides annual reports on the status of mountain caribou recovery efforts. The most recent report was released in June 2013. The report contains recommendations on how best to recover mountain caribou. The Progress

## ADVICE TO MINISTER

Board is anticipated to deliver its report on 2013/14 activities in late September 2014.

### Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild (RCRW) Project:

The Province is partnering with a number of local stakeholders and First Nations for a maternal penning project (which use fencing to protect pregnant cows and newborn calves from predators when at their most vulnerable) to increase caribou calf survival. The project has recently concluded its first year of operation:

The Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild (RCRW) project released twelve adult caribou and nine calves from a pen near Revelstoke in early August. To date there have been no reported fatalities. The project will continue in 2015 where 20-25 caribou will be captured and maternally penned. The RCRW recently obtained \$100,000 in funding from the Province.

### South Purcells Caribou transfer

A transfer of caribou to the Purcells-South herd occurred in March 2012. Nineteen radio collared caribou from a donor herd near Dease Lake were moved to the Purcells-South herd, to augment this herd which had a population of only 14 animals, and is at significant risk.

Unfortunately, the transplanted animals suffered high mortality, and only two animals (one bull and one cow) are believed to be still alive. The project is being refined to hopefully deliver stronger results, with a proposed completion in 2015. The project will receive a critical independent review to ensure it remains a viable tool to use in the MCRIP

### Caribou Ecotypes

Caribou in B.C. are one species (Woodland Caribou) but there are three ecotypes (Mountain, Northern, Boreal) based on habitat use and behaviour.

- **Mountain Caribou (est. 1,500):** occur in 15 herds in mountainous forests in south-east and east-central B.C. Mountain caribou management is guided by the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan (2007)
- **Boreal Caribou (est. 1,000)** occur in six herds in bog and peatland habitat in the northeast corner of B.C. Boreal caribou management is guided by Boreal Caribou Implementation Plan (2010)
- **Northern Ecotype (est. 17,500)** occur in 31 herds broadly distributed across the B.C. interior in windswept mountainous areas and adjacent low-lying plateaus. Peace Northern Caribou Plan (2013) provides management direction for 7 northern caribou herds

This note discusses only Mountain Caribou management.

# APPENDIX – Status of Mountain Caribou Herds in B.C.:

HERD_NAME	Trends					
	2014 estimate	2013 Estimate	Year	Current (1-2y)	Short (2-7y)	Long (7-21 y)
Purcells North		0	2009	NA	NA	-
George Mt		0	2007	NA	NA	-
Central Rockies		3	2008	NA	NA	-
Monashee		3	2011	NA	0	-
Frisby-Boulder		13	2013	0-	-	-
Purcells South	19	25	2013	0	0	-
Duncan		2	2012	-	0-	-
Columbia South		7	2013	0-	-	-
Groundhog		11	2013	-	-	-
South Selkirks	18	33	2013	-	-	0-
Narrow Lake	47	42	2012	0	-	-
Barkerville		90	2012	0-	-	-
Nakusp	53	105	2012	-	0	-
Columbia North	124	186	2013	0	0-	-
North Cariboo	219	222	2011	0	-	-
Wells Gray south		109	2013	-	-	-
Wells Gray north		267	2013	0	0+	-
Hart Ranges		459	2013	-	-	-

## TOTAL

1577

## Trends

+ increasing  
 - decreasing  
 0 stable  
 NA can't tell likely cause population is too small

Communications Contact:

s.15,s.19

Program Area Contact:

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