

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT  
MEETING INFORMATION NOTE**

Date: April 29, 2014  
File: 280-20  
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**PREPARED FOR:** Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment

**DATE AND TIME OF MEETING:** Wednesday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 pm

**ATTENDEES:** Minister Polak; Wes Shoemaker, Deputy Min MOE; Tom Hoffman, Woodlands Manager (Tolko Ind.); Alec Dale (Exec Dir. Ecosystems Br. MOE)

**ISSUE:** Tolko is concerned about potential impacts of the Federal Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population in Canada.

**BACKGROUND:**

After extensive consultation with industry and other stakeholders, the Province approved the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan (MCRIP) in October, 2007. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) is now responsible for the MCRIP's operational delivery with support from Ministry of Environment.

The MCRIP committed Government to conducting the following recovery actions:

- protecting 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;
- managing human recreational activities in mountain caribou habitat in a manner that ensures caribou habitat areas are effectively protected;
- managing predator populations of wolf and cougar where they are preventing the recovery of mountain caribou populations;
- managing the primary prey of caribou predators;
- boosting caribou numbers in threatened herds with animals transplanted from elsewhere to ensure herds achieve critical mass for self-sufficiency;
- supporting adaptive management and research and implement effective monitoring plans for habitat, recreation and predator-prey management; and
- instituting a cross-sector progress board in spring 2008 to monitor the effectiveness of recovery actions

In response to a legal challenge by Ecojustice, the federal government posted for public review (January 2014) a draft recovery strategy for caribou within the federally designated 'Southern Mountains National Ecological Area', which includes all mountain caribou herds. The draft federal strategy identifies Critical Habitat under the Federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) which must be 'effectively protected' under SARA.

The operations of Tolko fall within the area covered by the BC MCRIP and they were an active participant in development of the MCRIP and have foregone potential harvesting activities to help ensure recovery of these caribou herds.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Actions within the MCRIP have largely been implemented with the exception of effectively managing wolf populations. Industry has criticised government for failing to effectively implement this recovery action, and will be very reluctant to forgo additional harvesting opportunities to meet any additional habitat targets imposed by the federal recovery strategy.

The recently approved BC Wolf Management Plan should provide the Province with the ability to effectively control wolves in these areas, which in turn will increase the probability of caribou recovery.

Our (FLNRO/MOE) initial review of the draft federal recovery strategy indicates that (by design) it is fairly consistent with the habitat protection and recreation closures already in place under the MCRIP. Thus, the herds in these areas would be the least likely to require any additional habitat protection (and associated economic impacts) under SARA.  
**s.13,s.16**

## **SUGGESTED RESPONSE:**

The province will continue to implement recovery actions and adaptively manage these herds under the MCRIP.

**s.13,s.16**

The newly approved Wolf Management Plan should provide the Province with the ability to more effectively manage the wolf population in these areas and facilitate caribou recovery and these actions would align well with the federal strategy.

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