

MEETING NOTE

MEETING DATE: March 28, 2023

PREPARED FOR: Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

TOPIC: HeliCat Canada would like to share its environmental stewardship, decarbonization, reconciliation, and tourism initiatives and discuss potential alignment with your priorities.

ATTENDEES:

Helicat Canada (HCC):
Ross Cloutier, Executive Director
David Butler, Director, Sustainability , Canadian Mountain Holidays LP

Global Public Affairs:
Emilio Caputo, Consultant; OR
Leila Farme, Director

ENV:
Jim Standen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Conservation & Recreation Division
David Ranson, Executive Director, Provincial Services Branch, BC Parks
James Quayle, Manager, Conservation, BC Parks

KEY MESSAGES:

- Many of the parks and protected areas BC Parks manages were established to protect wildlife, like caribou, and so we have a strong interest in their wellbeing and recovery.
- I support the work of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) taking steps to modernize wildlife guidelines for heli-ski operators for *Land Act* tenures. BC Parks have been directly involved in this work and see it as helping to inform how BC Parks staff manage park use permits for heli-skiing in parks.
- I am aware that WLRS is seeking to work collaboratively with HCC and operators to meet legal obligations and public expectations. This is an opportunity for HCC and its members to show environmental leadership.
- As you are aware, I will not be able to comment on statutory decisions around parks use permits for heli-skiing, as these are evaluated by BC Parks Regional Directors as independent statutory decision makers.

KEY FACTS:

- Heli-skiing is a source of disturbance and displacement for caribou, identified by scientists and in federal status reports and recovery strategies.

- A BC Parks Statutory Decision Maker (SDM) has recently issued a decision to Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) for a mid-term renewal of a park use permit in caribou habitat in Goat Range Provincial Parks in the Kootenays. Based on analysis from WLRS to protect caribou and wolverine habitat, the SDM has changed the permit to close sensitive areas in the park: CMH has accepted the permit “under extreme duress”.

s.14

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- BC Parks currently has five park use permits for heli-skiing in occupied caribou core winter habitat. All heli-ski permits within parks are paired with much larger *Land Act* tenures for heli-ski operations outside of parks.
- BC has committed to “re-evaluate conditions of park use permits in provincial protected areas where heliskiing is permitted in Southern Mountain Caribou habitat” as part of the federal / provincial Section 11 agreement to recover caribou, signed in February 2020.

- s.12; s.13

- Helicat Canada cancelled a meeting with WLRS on February 3, 2023. They are well-known in the resource sector for their opposition to new efforts by WLRS to provide new guidance for heli-ski operators.
- WLRS is proposing to add significant conditions to heli-ski tenures outside of parks, including GPS flight-tracking, larger offset distances from caribou, and new wildlife guidelines for heli-ski operators.
- Stakeholder engagement on the guidelines has been underway for the past year; broader First Nations and public engagement is pending via ‘Engage BC’ in the late winter/spring of 2023. BC government staff are regular attendees and presenters at HCC AGMs.
- According to WLRS, members of the First Nations-BC Habitat Conservation Forum recently expressed strong concerns related to the impacts of helicopters on wildlife and indigenous food security and supported a stronger regulatory approach to management of disturbance to wildlife from helicopter-supported tourism and recreation.
- Park management plans allow for authorization of pre-existing uses, like heli-skiing, through park use permits. All plans in caribou range were completed prior to 2004, and caribou status has continued to decline since then.

Contact

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