

## MEETING NOTE

**DATE:** May 16, 2024

**PREPARED FOR:** Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

**REGARDING:** Meeting with Ross Cloutier, CEO, HeliCat Canada and Dave Butler, VP of Sustainability, Canadian Mountain Holidays regarding recent Narwhal interview on requirements for heli-ski operators in caribou habitat.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship  
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Stewardship Division

### STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:

- The provincial government is proposing further engagement and collaboration with First Nations, the heli-tourism sector and the federal government on a 'pilot' study to analyze flight path data to provide a better understanding of interactions between helicopters and mountain goats and caribou. It will build on data already collected in mountain goat habitats in the Skeena region. It will assess the short-term and long-term effects of helicopters on these animals and support the development of mitigative measures and ensure compliance with those measures.
- We are working closely across government, including with Directors of Authorizations, the Caribou Recovery Program, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV), for coordination of policy options, management approaches, and collaboration with the sector and other partners.
- Other industries (e.g., mining and forestry) are required to abide by timing windows and setback distances when operating in or around wildlife habitat. These industries also provide detailed spatial data on their operational activities.
- Data for the pilot study will be provided by heli-tourism operators on a voluntary basis and as a condition of some tenures.
- [s. 12, s. 13, s. 16](#)
- It is important that we continue to build a better understanding of impacts human activities have on wildlife, including species at risk, so that we can have confidence that our actions uphold constitutional and regulatory responsibilities of the province (e.g., commitments under the bi-lateral British Columbia (B.C.)-Canada *Species at Risk Act* Section 11 Agreement for Caribou Recovery), as well as the social responsibility of the sector.
- We look forward to a strong partnership in that regard.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- The cost of collecting and submitting flight path data to the government has not been raised by industry as a significant concern.
- Heli-ski operators continue to collect wildlife sighting data (but are not providing the data to the province) and have retained a professional biologist to analyze the data.

### BACKGROUND:

[s. 13, s. 21](#)

- Research demonstrates that helicopters can displace and cause stress in large mammals, including caribou and mountain goat. However, this research has provided few mitigation

strategies for reducing the impacts of helicopters on wildlife (i.e., 2 km setback distances) and limited evidence that operators comply with those recommendations.

- The province has been in discussion with Helicat Canada about obtaining flight path data for several years now. Helicat has not provided information, but some individual operators have.
- Helicat Canada has expressed concern with providing flight path data to government. They believe the data is at risk of being made public, the heli-ski industry is being unfairly targeted, and that there is no clear plan for using the data.
- Data is protected by privacy laws, helicopter use by various industries is regulated at fine-scales, and a draft pilot study proposal can be shared with industry for further discussion.

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|                  | Initials | Date         |
|------------------|----------|--------------|
| DM               | LH       | May 17, 2024 |
| ADM              | JP       | May 17, 2024 |
| Program Dir/Mgr. | CD       | May 16, 2024 |