



Ministry of  
Forests, Lands, Natural  
Resource Operations  
and Rural Development

# PROVINCIAL CARIBOU RECOVERY PROGRAM

Discussion Paper





**April 2018**

**For thousands of years, herds of Woodland Caribou have roamed British Columbia contributing to the Province's rich biodiversity and ecosystems. With its stately antlers and majestic grace, the caribou is a nationally recognized and treasured symbol of the beauty of the north.**

Caribou are conditioned to thrive in the most severe environmental conditions. Despite this, new challenges have brought about significant change to their habitat causing their livelihood to be in jeopardy. In the last century, the number of caribou in B.C. has declined from 40,000 to less than 19,000. The Province has started to take action to protect Woodland Caribou, but more needs to be done to conserve this culturally significant and iconic species for future generations.

This discussion paper serves as a resource document to provide you with background information to help you understand the unique challenges and opportunities of Woodland Caribou conservation efforts. Your input will help us to create a Caribou Recovery Program.

The Caribou Recovery Program will consider ways to reduce threats to caribou, while balancing the needs of all British Columbians, including Indigenous communities, industry and recreation enthusiasts. We look forward to hearing your ideas.



**Honourable Doug Donaldson**

Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource  
Operations and Rural Development





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 Invitation to comment on draft Caribou Recovery Program ...</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2 The Caribou Recovery Program .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3 A New Approach: Made in B.C.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Program Objectives .....	10
3.2 Program Principles .....	10
3.3 Program Challenges .....	10
3.4 Strategic Shifts .....	11
<b>4 Management and Decision Making .....</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Land Use Plans and Models.....	12
4.2 Herd Plans .....	12
4.3 Information Management .....	13
4.4 Monitoring and Inventory.....	13
4.5 Measuring Our Efforts .....	13
4.6 Reporting .....	13
<b>5 Managing Habitat .....</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1 Forest Practices Regulations.....	14
5.2 Habitat Restoration.....	15
5.3 Habitat Protection Legislation .....	16
5.4 Recreation Management .....	16
5.5 Parks and Protected Areas.....	16
<b>6 Managing Populations .....</b>	<b>17</b>
6.1 Caribou Health and Science.....	17
6.2 Predator Control .....	17
6.3 Penning.....	20
6.4 Supplemental feeding.....	20
6.5 Primary prey management .....	20
<b>7 Engaging the Community .....</b>	<b>22</b>
7.1 First Nations Engagement and Collaboration.....	22
7.2 Adjacent Jurisdictions and Other Governments .....	22
7.3 Stakeholder relationships and Partnerships.....	22
7.4 Communication and Outreach To The Public.....	23
7.5 Compliance and Enforcement .....	23
<b>8 Conclusion – Send your comments .....</b>	<b>23</b>

# 1/ Invitation to Comment on Draft Caribou Recovery Program

**The provincial government is embarking on a vigorous new campaign to restore and conserve woodland caribou in British Columbia, and we want you to participate.**

The Caribou Recovery Program is a long-term commitment that will include all B.C. caribou herds in a comprehensive and uniform approach to conservation, based on traditional knowledge and science. The province has already committed to \$27 million to ensure a strong start.

We are doing this now for several reasons.

Despite the province's efforts over the years, many of B.C.'s 54 caribou herds are in decline. At the same time, challenges faced by caribou continue to grow: climate change effects, continued interest by industry and recreational sectors to access caribou regions, and changes to caribou habitats.

The Province is also committed to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These will have important influence on how we achieve caribou conservation.

Finally, the federal government is initiating conservation efforts for caribou under the authority of the federal *Species at Risk Act*. The province is expected to reduce threats to caribou herds and their critical habitat. At the same time, we must try to balance sustainable stewardship of the herds with the needs and interests of British Columbians. All these factors will guide our actions.

This Caribou Recovery Program discussion paper details the challenges and opportunities that lay before us as we work toward recovery and sustainable stewardship of B.C.'s woodland caribou. This paper highlights many of those actions. The discussion paper will be reviewed in an engagement period with First Nations and interested groups

We value your knowledge, your experiences, and your ideas. Let us know what you think, if we have missed anything. Your ideas will be reflected in the final paper that we are targeting for spring 2019.

You can submit your comments at [engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou)





## 2/ The Caribou Recovery Program

The caribou is an iconic animal in Canada, a symbol of the ability to thrive in the wild northern nation in which we live. In fact, we carry its image with us in our pockets every day – the caribou has graced the Canadian quarter since 1937.

For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples hunted caribou, and many continue to do so today. Caribou are still found across the nation, and in the boreal forest and arctic regions of other northern countries.

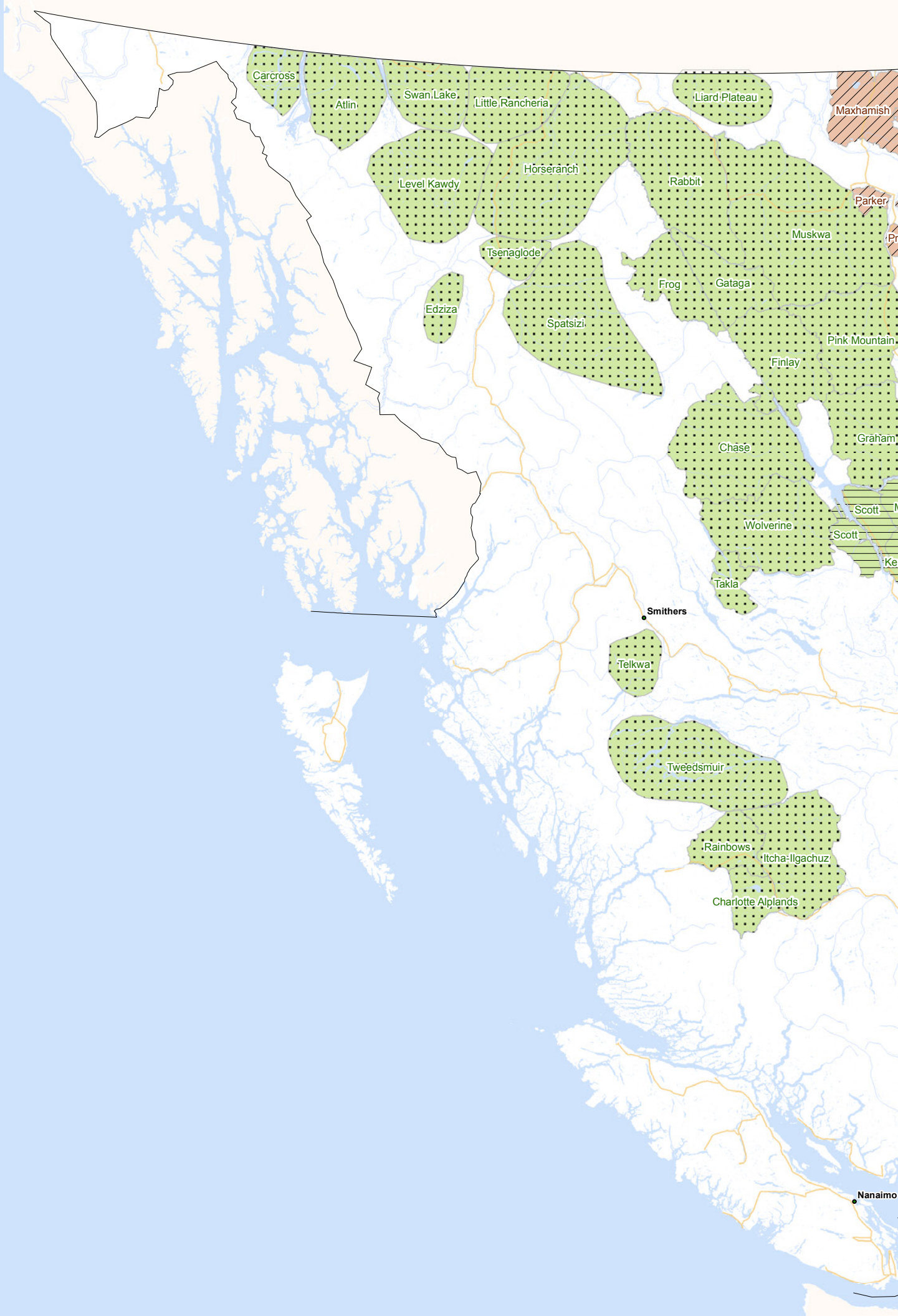
**British Columbia is home to the woodland caribou, *Rangifer tarandus* caribou. The herds found in its mountainous mature forests are an important part of the natural food chain and the rich biodiversity in the province.**

Sadly, like many wildlife species around the world, caribou numbers are declining in Canada. Caribou have declined from between 30,000 and 40,000 in B.C. at the turn of the last century to approximately 19,000 caribou today. In the past three decades, many B.C. caribou herds have become threatened. The federal government has increased its efforts under the *Species at Risk Act* to protect them, while the Province has used its own policies and targeted management plans.

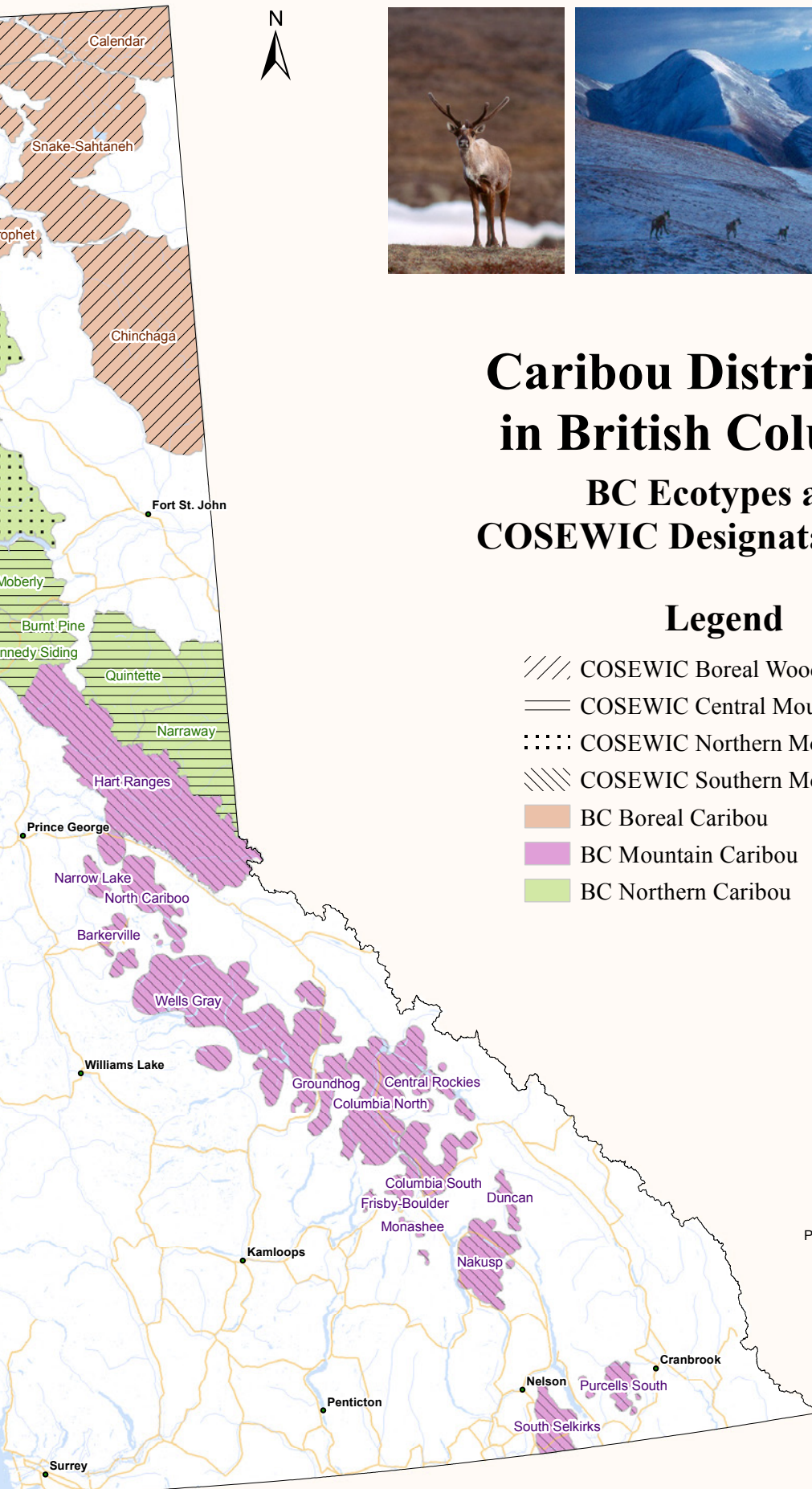


Photo by Doug Heard









Photos: J. Hobbs

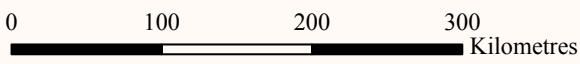
# Caribou Distribution in British Columbia

## BC Ecotypes and COSEWIC Designatable Units

### Legend

- //// COSEWIC Boreal Woodland DU
- == COSEWIC Central Mountain DU
- :::: COSEWIC Northern Mountain DU
- \\\\ COSEWIC Southern Mountain DU
- BC Boreal Caribou
- BC Mountain Caribou
- BC Northern Caribou

Projection: BC Albers  
Datum NAD 83  
Date: January 2016  
Produced by: Knowledge Management Branch  
Ministry of Environment





**Today, the province is home to 54 herds of woodland caribou that reside in three distinct types of habitat:**

- 16 herds of mountain eco-type caribou live in mountainous terrain
- 32 herds of northern eco-type caribou on low-elevation or high-elevation winter ranges
- 6 herds of boreal eco-type caribou who live year-round in muskeg and peat wetlands of the boreal forest

Wildlife managers and biologists have monitored and devised recovery programs for specific caribou herds in B.C. for many years. Despite their significant efforts, herd numbers keep dwindling, while threats to caribou and caribou habitat keep growing.

All six of the boreal herds and 23 of the southern mountain herds are decreasing. Of the herds in B.C., 14 have fewer than 25 animals. Only three of the southern mountain caribou herds saw improvements from recent trials of maternal penning and predator reduction. Currently, scientists do not have accurate counts of herd size or population trends for many of the northern herds. This uncertainty is another reason to step up our game.

The main threat to most caribou populations is a high rate of predation by wolves, bears and cougars that is out of balance from the natural cycle. This can happen when natural events (forest fires) and human activity (such as logging, mining) convert large areas of mature forests to young forest landscapes. These young, open forests provide ideal foods for other deer, elk and moose. These ungulate species are the primary prey of wolves and cougar. However, as these prey species move into caribou habitat, they are followed by wolves, which then hunt the caribou as a secondary prey.

Woodland caribou living in mountainous areas graze mainly on tree lichens found in mature forests, or on lichens that grow on the ground. As a result, caribou are highly dependent on old growth forest and alpine areas for critical food sources. The loss of mature forests and alpine regions from logging, other human activity or forest fires reduces the caribou's main food source, which may affect their health, pregnancy rates and calf survival.

Roads, trails, and seismic lines create new routes that make it easy for predators like wolves to reach caribou herds. Forestry, mining and recreational activities often disturb the caribou and cause them to leave their preferred habitats for less desirable sites. Climate change brings more challenges, as extreme or unusual weather events and other changes alter the caribou behaviours, habitats and ecosystems in subtle ways we are still striving to understand.

All of these stressors can add up and threaten to overwhelm both the struggling and healthy herds of caribou. Our increasing intrusions into the caribou's habitats now require us to try to repair those disturbed habitats, alter our activities and take other measures to help the caribou herds recover. We must act quickly.

The Province will move ahead with plans to strengthen the ways it can protect and enhance its caribou herds and their habitats. As it does, it must work closely with Indigenous communities, with many other groups with a range of economic and environmental interests, and the Government of Canada.

In order to respond to these challenges in a meaningful way, we are developing a strong, disciplined, comprehensive and transparent plan of action to address the unique cultural, legislative and ecological conditions of our province.

We intend to be a leader in stewardship of caribou in Canada – with a made in B.C. response. This plan outlines how the Province will ultimately restore its caribou populations and their habitats.

## 3/ A New Approach: Made in BC

**The Province has committed to a new long-term, comprehensive, science-based approach to protect and preserve caribou populations – the Caribou Recovery Program. The Province has put aside \$50 million over five years to get this program established.**

Two ministries will jointly lead delivery of the program: the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ECCS) and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD). But, success depends on the participation of many other provincial agencies and the federal government.

There will be significant changes in regulations, leadership, program design and measurement, data management and accessibility. We will deepen the science to better understand this species and our affect on the herds and their habitats.

There will be closer relationships with First Nations that reflect the government's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will pursue partnerships with affected sectors, communities, partners and federal agencies.

**The mission of the program is to transform caribou management through a comprehensive, collaborative and accountable provincial program.**

### Program Governance

The Caribou Recovery Program is created to conserve and recover caribou populations in the province. It must also align provincial goals with those of the federal government, and to address the interests of Indigenous communities and stakeholders.

Guiding this effort will be a provincial Caribou Project Board made up of the Assistant Deputy Ministers who are responsible for delivering significant aspects of the program. They are:

- FLNRORD – ADM, Resource Stewardship Division
- FLNRORD – ADM Regional Operations, North
- FLNRORD – ADM Regional Operations, South
- ECCS – ADM, Environmental Stewardship and Strategic Policy

The Caribou Project Board will help design and approve integrated work plans, budgets and staffing across the two Ministries and six FLNRORD regions involved in caribou recovery. The board will focus on collaboration and strategic direction, and prevent duplication of efforts across agencies.

At the operational level, agency teams will carry out the board's decisions. These teams will help design, execute, measure and manage various program aspects, and harmonize decisions with other relevant programs.



### 3.1 Program Objectives

A range of broad goals will guide the Caribou Recovery Program over the next five years.

#### The goals include:

- Reverse the decline and achieve stable, increasing populations of identified woodland caribou herds
- Provide certainty to affected natural resource users
- Advance collaboration and reconciliation with Indigenous communities
- Actively collaborate with partners in caribou recovery
- Increase public confidence via accountable, effective program delivery/management

These goals will direct how we build our plans and make decisions, how we consult with Indigenous communities, resource sectors, environmental groups and the general public, and how we take action on the ground.

#### The program objectives are to:

- Increase the number of caribou
- Maintain and recruit functional caribou habitat
- Protect high-value caribou habitat in key areas
- Provide predictable zonation for resource users
- Provide predictable thresholds for resource users.
- Support Indigenous communities in caribou recovery
- Encourage Indigenous communities to participate in caribou recovery actions
- Ensure caribou recovery planning efforts reflect Indigenous values interests and perspectives
- Develop partnerships that will contribute to caribou recovery
- Engage partners and indigenous communities in the development of the Caribou Recovery Program Plan
- Communicate program objectives and results
- Develop and improve business processes to transform deliver of caribou recovery
- Prepare recovery plans for all herds that are supported by stakeholders

### 3.2 Program Principles

Along with our broad goals, we will follow a set of principles to guide our actions as we adopt changes in organization and processes for the new Caribou Recovery Program. The principles will help us be consistent in our work, and to be good stewards of the caribou populations.

#### Program principles identified to date include:

- Incorporate interests and values of Indigenous communities in decisions and activities
- Make decisions based on the best available science, in a collaborative way
- Employ consistent, provincial-level program management and logic
- Ensure transparency in the decision process and open access to all data
- Recognize the unique characteristics of each herd and their habitats
- Focus on the long-term sustainability of caribou populations
- Aim for continuous improvement and change
- Value scientific research and an expanding the knowledge base
- Actively engage with all interested parties
- Commit to live within our means with unbiased use of public funds and resources

### 3.3 Program Challenges

We recognize there will be challenges in reaching our Caribou Recovery Program goals. Some include:

- Recovering all B.C.'s caribou herds may not be feasible, without unlimited funding and control over land use. We will need to prioritize our decisions for all 54 herds.
- The public and industry will not be supportive of all our decisions. Our challenge is to collaborate with groups and bring them on board as stewardship partners.
- New, comprehensive herd plans for caribou recovery will likely modify existing Cabinet-approved caribou implementation plans.
- There may be differences between federal and provincial government goals for effective conservation and recovery of caribou. We are currently working to bridge those gaps.



### 3.4 Strategic Shifts

In order to create plans for all the caribou in B.C., and to align our work with the federal *Species at Risk Act* objectives, the new Caribou Recovery Program will mean significant changes in how the Province will approach this work.

We expect to make significant changes in how the Province will apply laws and regulation, support, plan, carry out, monitor and record this work. We will strengthen relationships with First Nations, sectors groups, partners and the public, and other jurisdictions. We will better communicate to the partners and public how and why we make our decisions, and will share our findings and the outcome of our actions.

Generally, the new recovery program will be more disciplined and integrated in its scope, so that our approach remains consistent, transparent and reliable over time.



## 4/ Management & Decision Making

**The province will adopt a program-wide management system that will include a series of consistent steps to keep decision-making at all levels flexible and fair. The governance and team planners will use a systematic decision-making process that will help guide their choices in all aspects of caribou recovery strategies.**

This “structured decision making” will be used at the provincial and the detailed herd planning levels for each of the 54 herds. The upgraded management process will track how planning decisions actually work in the field, the outcomes, and their effectiveness. For example, B.C. plans to pilot this structure decision making process for herds found within the Central Mountain Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. The results will be used to adjust or refine decisions in the next round or cycle of planning.

### 4.1 Land Use Plans and Models

Land use decisions affect caribou habitat and populations, and caribou recovery actions also impact land use decisions. Wildlife managers will consider the impacts of caribou recovery actions for the caribou, First Nations, resource and other affected groups.

We will use land use models that will clearly show affected parties why decisions were made, and to assess results after actions are taken. The models will also be used to show how proposed plans might work. The models will be designed so that they can be easily understood by members of the public.

### 4.2 Herd Plans

One of our most important guiding principles is to use consistent, fact-based approaches with all caribou herds in the province. We will adopt a new format of ‘herd plans’ that will:

- Provide a consistent approach to managing all herds in B.C.
- Recognize the unique circumstances of each herd
- Build from current (legacy) caribou management plans
- Consider First Nations’ and stakeholder interests and ideas
- Be included in larger regional plans

Herd plans will describe the status of each herd, and the threats faced by that herd. The plans will take note of previous actions, and actions that are planned. As we implement the herd plans, we will carefully monitor how well the caribou respond, and modify our actions as needed. Herd plans will help us document our decisions and discuss issues with First Nations and with stakeholders.



*Photo by Doug Heard*

### **4.3 Information Management**

A well-planned and organized system to manage information is key to the success of the new Caribou Recovery Plan. Good information management is important because the reasons behind decisions on caribou management plans are multiple and complex, and can involve several government and public groups.

The Caribou Recovery Program will develop a central storehouse of field reports, traditional knowledge and other vital details that are used to make decisions. It will include past and current information. Caribou recovery information will be available to government scientists and managers, to the wider scientific community, industry, non-government organizations and the public.

**As the database grows, caribou program information will be made available to the public online, to foster public awareness, citizen science and involvement.**

### **4.4 Monitoring and Inventory**

We will develop a standard monitoring and inventory process to keep the Caribou Recovery Plan database current. Monitoring will track caribou herds to assess the impacts of our management actions. It will also record other changes, such as predator numbers or climate change effects, which could significantly impact our planning choices. Monitoring will also record impacts on other wildlife, and on human user groups.

### **4.5 Performance Management (Or Measuring our Efforts)**

One important to have centralized program information is to measure and evaluate the program performance. Initially, performance management will build consistency across program work and link actions to our common objectives for caribou recovery. We will identify metrics (things to measure) and apply them to track our progress toward program objectives.

Over time, managers will be able to assess the benefit of the program work and, where warranted, adapt their actions to improve results. Assessing how well we do our work will also enable the Province to transparently demonstrate to the public the effectiveness of our work in caribou recovery.

### **4.6 Reporting**

The first caribou recovery report will be published in April 2018 with annual reports published every year after that. Program details and results will be available to the public at the Caribou Recovery Program website.



# 5/ Managing Habitat

## 5.1 Forest Practices Regulations

Regulations that guide land use activities provide the most effective ways to protect caribou areas and help recovery. In most of British Columbia, the forestry sector has the most significant current and potential impacts on caribou habitat.

We will work with this sector to bring in more caribou-friendly approaches. We will produce a *Best Practice Guide: Forestry in Caribou Country*, to show forest sector members how they can harvest in a hypothetical caribou habitat in ways that reduce or erase impacts on caribou.

**Current legislation that regulates forest practices with respect to impacts on caribou and caribou habitat are:**

- The *Land Act* and its Land Use Objectives
- The *Forest and Range Practices Act* and its Government Actions Regulation

However, conflicting goals between caribou recovery and timber production limit the effectiveness of these laws to protect caribou. The Province can ease conflicts by reviewing its forestry regulations, and make recommendations that will help support caribou recovery and forestry.

**We recognize any new or amended forestry policy must:**

- address the economic costs of new harvesting and access,
- ensure the appraisal system provides licensees incentives for a greater emphasis on habitat restoration, and
- include guidance on how much timber can be harvested and still reach caribou recovery targets.

Updated forestry rules can be put into action through herd plans, compliance, legislation and education.



*Photo by Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development staff*



Photo by Rob Buchanan

## 5.2 Habitat Restoration

Caribou need large areas of undisturbed land in which to roam freely. Mining, forestry, oil and gas, renewable energy and road building activities have all impacted caribou habitats in the Province. Fortunately, restoration work can improve disturbed habitats and erase some negative impacts of these activities. Restoring habitats will also help the Province meet federal caribou recovery disturbance thresholds set by the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

**Two methods of habitat restoration hold the most promise in the province: functional and ecological restoration.**

**Functional restoration** is aimed at reducing the use of linear features; roads, trails, rights-of-way, and seismic lines. Wolves, other large predators and people can move along these access routes more quickly than through dense bush, and easily travel to caribou habitats that were once difficult to reach.

The intent of functional restoration is to reduce caribou mortality in the short term, and to reduce the need for ongoing predator control. Any functional restoration would depend on collaboration with industry, the public and First Nations communities.

Restoration will include replanting routes that are no longer in use, placing slash, trees and other debris across trails, disrupting sightlines, and putting up fences. These actions will also restrict human access.

**Ecological restoration** refers to the regeneration of a disturbed ecosystem to its pre-disturbed state. Tree replanting, enhanced site work, controlling herbaceous species such as willow, and fertilization help speed up the ecological restoration of disturbed habitat.

We will explore partnerships with groups inside and outside of government to carry out this work.



### 5.3 Habitat Protection Legislation

British Columbia's past strategy to protect caribou and other species has been to regulate land-use activities to reduce negative impacts. Canada's Caribou Recovery Strategy under the *Species at Risk Act* expects that critical caribou habitat in B.C. be "effectively protected." In general, this means all human activities must be controlled so that there is a high degree of certainty that caribou and caribou habitat will not be disturbed.

The Province has nearly 20 pieces of legislation that could affect land use, but these have a limited degree of effectiveness because they were not created with caribou protection in mind.

Another challenge is that important areas of caribou habitat in B.C. have few or no regulations in place to mitigate the impacts from industrial activity.

Complete protection of caribou habitat would require new habitat protection rules under existing legislation, or a new legal conservation designation that would govern the full range of land-based activities in any given habitat. The endangered species legislation under development will help to address many of the needs of caribou.

### 5.4 Recreation Management

Controlled and limited access to sensitive habitats in the backcountry is the most effective way to reduce disturbance from recreational activities. Public and stakeholder education is vital to raise awareness, to boost a stewardship culture, and encourage desired behaviour in recreational user groups.

#### Controlling access to caribou areas

While backcountry recreational activity has less impact on habitats than resource development uses, it could disturb or displace caribou from their preferred habitat.

To date, the Province has focused on restricting snowmobile and heli-ski operations in specific areas. We will continue to review regions where removing recreational access will decrease human and predator access, and reduce the disturbances to caribou habitat. We will use existing laws and policies to reduce access to sensitive areas, especially in situations where roads are not managed under tenures or other permits.

Working with the Conservation Officer Service, we will build a motor vehicle compliance strategy that will be applied across the province.

#### Education

Educating the public on the potential impacts of their activities on caribou herds and their habitats is essential, especially as more and more people want to visit the backcountry.

We will work with groups like the B.C. Snowmobile Federation, HeliCat Canada, guide outfitters, local recreational clubs, land tenure holders and others to help get the word out to their clients and members.

### 5.5 Parks and Protected Areas

A significant portion of caribou habitat in B.C. is in provincial parks and protected areas.

Different rules and applications for park and Crown lands means caribou management regulations in those two jurisdictions may be quite different in how well they protect caribou and their habitats. The challenge for the Province is to align this mix of agencies, regulations and economic interests in order to allow the Caribou Recovery Program to thrive throughout the province.

BC Parks will take a more active and leading role in making strategic decisions relating to caribou management in their jurisdictions.

# 6/ Managing Populations

## 6.1 Caribou Health and Science

### Science and Research

A substantial catalogue of scientific research on caribou management has been amassed over the span of decades, both in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada. B.C. continues to invest significant resources in projects in many areas of caribou science. Our science and research program will bring forward existing research, and invest in new science to inform caribou recovery and management and support all other components of the caribou recovery program.

We plan to develop a Strategic Science Plan to support caribou recovery, and envision establishing a Provincial Caribou Science Committee made up of biologists from across the province. The committee will work with regional staff to set objectives for caribou science and research.

### Health

Population size and good habitat are factors important in caribou recovery. We also need to better understand caribou health to help preserve and protect the species.

Improved wildlife health monitoring will strengthen our future herd management decisions. The B.C. Wildlife Health Program will develop standardized sample collection methods from live and dead animals to provide reliable data.

A new formal caribou health research program that is under development will directly support and complement ongoing caribou management and conservation work. The research will help us understand the impacts of various stressors on caribou health, and shed light on how health and genetics can affect the strength of caribou herds.

Finally, our vision is to create a Centre of Excellence for caribou health and genetic/genomic research, and lead the development of innovative methods of capturing general and specific measures of caribou health.



*Photo by Ministry of Forests, Land, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development staff*

## 6.2 Predator Control

Predator management is likely the most controversial action we take in caribou recovery.

Wolves are the caribou's principal predator in British Columbia, and high wolf numbers are associated with declining caribou populations.

Managing wolf populations and other caribou recovery actions is challenging. Both animals are part of a complex ecological and now human-influenced relationship. Wolf packs are dependent on their prey (moose, caribou, deer). Prey populations are affected by forest practices and other human activities that affect their habitat. When resource development and recreation open up new roads, wolves use them for easy access to wintering caribou herds.

Decisions on predator control must be approached with care, and with abundant and clear information to the public on how they were made. It is important to note that wolf control is never carried out in isolation as a single solution.



A warmer climate generates more fires

Logging requires roads and removes old forest

1/ Regenerating forests provide abundant forage; moose, deer and elk expand north as climate warms



2/ Wolf populations increase with abundant prey

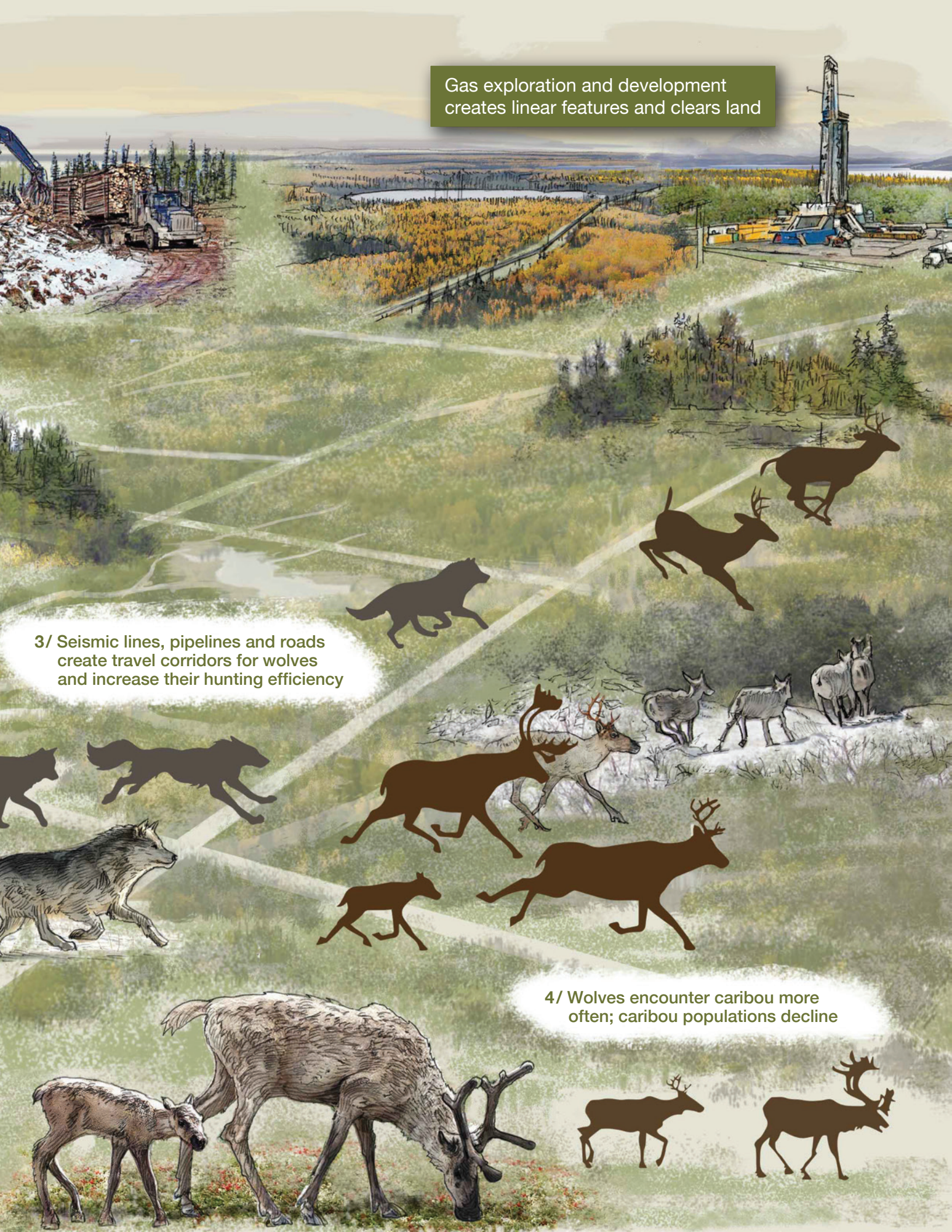




Gas exploration and development creates linear features and clears land

3/ Seismic lines, pipelines and roads create travel corridors for wolves and increase their hunting efficiency

4/ Wolves encounter caribou more often; caribou populations decline





As the Caribou Recovery Program planning continues, we will record approaches and policies currently used in B.C. and outside the province. B.C. is currently in year four of a five-year pilot project focusing on wolf removal around the South Selkirks and South Peace herds. Building on this knowledge, we can draft new provincial policy with a focus on multi-region predator plans, clear decision-making steps, and transparent communications.

Most importantly, we will develop science-based measures and criteria that will be the same as the Caribou Recovery Program's new decision-making and herd planning models.

### 6.3 Penning

British Columbia currently has several active maternity penning projects: one near Revelstoke, one near Creston, and another in the Northeast at Klinse-Za; each are operated through partnerships and receive funding from a variety of sources.

Maternity penning has both advocates and critics who bring different viewpoints on the overall benefits to caribou recovery that come from this activity.

On the positive side, maternity pens generally increase caribou numbers immediately, and are less controversial than wolf control. They provide opportunities for partnership and collaboration with First Nations.

However, maternity pens are costly and labour intensive. Effectiveness is governed by habitat availability and the herd size.

Alternatively, Alberta is working on an innovative penning approach, which is also under consideration for a pilot project in B.C. The large fenced "exclosure" concept involves the construction of very large fenced areas (up to 100 km<sup>2</sup>) where caribou can exist on a semi-permanent basis, protected from predators.

**Since much has yet to be learned about the impacts and consequences of this type of penning, the first steps will involve research into best practices, costs, and benefits in order to refine performance indicators for expected outcomes.**

### 6.4 Supplemental Feeding

Caribou herds may leave their preferred habitat because of predation, access roads or other human activities. In a new habitat, they may have fewer or less nutritious food, which could reduce their survival, pregnancy and juvenile growth rates.

Ongoing research projects suggest that large-scale supplemental feeding could offset the lack of good food in the wild, and may be a practical way to promote population growth. There are two experimental supplemental feeding programs in the province: the Kennedy Siding herd low elevation winter range, and the Telkwa herd high elevation winter range.

### 6.5 Primary Prey Management

Logging and forest fires have reduced some of the woodland caribou's preferred old forest habitats. The open meadows and young forest or early seral landscapes newly abundant with grass and shrubs attract moose, elk and deer. In turn, these primary prey species attract wolves, bears and cougars, which often choose caribou as secondary prey.

Reducing these other prey species in and around caribou habitat may help reduce the presence of predators, and protect caribou herds. This idea is being tested in pilot projects to reduce moose numbers in the Parsnip and Revelstoke areas. Findings from these ongoing projects will influence decisions for matrix (multiple species) habitat, and could lead to a standard approach in similar habitats.





*Photo by Doug Heard*

# 7/ Engaging the Community

The Caribou Recovery Program plan may impact many communities and sectors. Keeping the public and our partners informed will be important to the success of the program.

**Working with communities must happen on many levels, be collaborative, and ongoing. We will:**

- Communicate plans and progress to the public
- Pursue the public's ideas and concerns and consider them in our decisions
- Develop partnerships in caribou herds plans
- Educate wilderness users and all B.C. citizens and raise awareness

## 7.1 First Nations Engagement and Collaboration

Our BC Government is committed to fully adopting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This has important implications for the provincial Caribou Recovery Program.

British Columbia will work with First Nations and with other ministries to advance reconciliation through the caribou program. We will involve First Nations communities across B.C. to ensure their interests are represented at all levels of decision-making, from early policy development to on-the-ground actions.

We will start with relationships already in place, such as Government-to-Government Agreements, and regional initiatives. Existing protocols will guide any partnerships and policies we expect will form as we expand projects on the ground, or as new situations arise.

We intend to work in close partnership with First Nations, and will follow these principles:

- Support Aboriginal and Treaty rights and title
- Develop collaborative methods for planning recovery
- Create partnership opportunities in our recovery plans

## 7.2 Adjacent Jurisdictions and Other Governments

The Province will continue its long-standing and valued collaboration on caribou recovery and research with adjacent jurisdictions (Alberta, Yukon, Idaho, Montana), and the federal government.

We will work with our provincial and federal counterparts to co-ordinate our work to try to meet the *Species At Risk Act* goals.

We will continue to seek and formalize valuable collaborations with these jurisdictions, to share our science and solutions and resources.

We intend to become a national leader on caribou recovery solutions, science and research.

## 7.3 Stakeholder Relationships and Partnerships

B.C. has a long history of formal and informal relationships with a range of stakeholders to work on caribou conservation. The Caribou Recovery Program will develop a more formal, consistent way to keep our conversations and partnerships going with these groups, but also retain the flexibility to deal with their unique concerns.

We will explore the creation of a B.C.-wide stakeholder organization. They may be invited to comment on reports, help with funding programs, or help us engage with communities and industry members.



## Partnerships

We also recognize the Caribou Recovery Program depends a great deal on strong partnerships, with a host of participants: First Nations, environmental NGOs, recreation and resource sectors, communities and governments. We rely on partners to deliver some or all of the caribou recover actions. All of our work will be more successful in a spirit of open collaboration, and with a robust partnership program.

## 7.4 Communication and Outreach to the Public

We will provide more information to the public and other interested parties about our work. In addition, we will help the public share their feedback with us.

As we refine our communications plans, we will ask our stakeholder groups what kinds of information they need, and their preferred method of communication. We will expand our list of interested parties. We will refine or update our information and engagement tools, including:

- A web-based library of scientific, research, monitoring and progress reports, and other data
- Interactive mapping capability
- Outreach materials (portable signs, brochures, contact cards)
- Participation in public events (community events, conferences, trade shows)
- Annual program progress report
- Caribou recovery team hosted regular update calls for Indigenous groups, communities, environmental groups, industry, and other stakeholders
- Annual program progress report

## 7.5 Compliance and Enforcement

Updated goals for caribou recovery will require fresh ways to motivate people to comply with regulations. Generally, compliance is preferable to enforcement. Education and conversations with land users, stakeholders and the public encourage compliance. Enforcement will be required at times.

We will work on a natural resource sector-wide caribou compliance and enforcement strategy, building on existing roles and policies, with plans for enforcement and monitoring in specific areas. Recreational use, poaching, access control, forestry and mining will require much interaction for enforcement staff. We will develop an overall compliance and enforcement strategy that focuses on caribou and habitat.

# 8/ Conclusion – Send Your Comments

**We have provided you an outline on how we propose to proceed with our Caribou Recovery Program. What do you think? What are your thoughts and comments?**

You can provide your comments online at [engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou) or e-mail [caribou.recovery@gov.bc.ca](mailto:caribou.recovery@gov.bc.ca).

# PROVINCIAL CARIBOU RECOVERY PROGRAM

**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 9338 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9M1

**Email:**

[caribou.recovery@gov.bc.ca](mailto:caribou.recovery@gov.bc.ca)

To participate in the discussion, please visit:

[engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou)

*Cover Image: Photo by Conrad Thiessen*

