

A LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR WOODLAND CARIBOU HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Through its approach and concrete actions, the Québec Government hopes to become a leader in woodland caribou habitat management.

The future long-term strategy will form a basis for the protection and restoration of key elements of woodland caribou habitat. By clarifying habitat protection requirements, it will provide greater predictability for economic activities involving land and natural resource development. It will also focus on the stringent nature and sustainability of habitat management practices. Québec's ability to meet this management challenge while working within the legal framework and fulfilling its other commitments will also help to ensure that boreal forest resources are positioned advantageously on the markets.

In addition, the long-term strategy will be implemented with due regard for its socio-economic impacts and in compliance with sustainable development principles. Measures will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts of the proposed actions in the regions concerned. For example, the Government is considering the possibility of proposing new timber supply sources, among other things by applying new forest management practices. Wealth-generating possibilities from the use of wood are also being explored, including the development of value-added products and the potential for secondary and tertiary wood processing.

The Government will also carry out monitoring to ensure that its woodland caribou habitat protection efforts are targeted effectively, and that habitat management practices produce the anticipated results. The strategy will therefore become a reference for the conservation of threatened or vulnerable species.



A NEW STRATEGY TO PROTECT WOODLAND CARIBOU HABITAT

The woodland caribou is designated as a vulnerable species under the *Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species*. Its population, which lives in Québec's boreal forest, is currently estimated at nearly 7,000 animals.

The Québec Government adopted its Woodland Caribou Habitat Stewardship Plan in April 2016.

Its purpose in doing this was to implement a weighted approach in which the bulk of the protection effort would be focused on the key elements of caribou habitat, in places where the chances of success are the greatest. In keeping with the Action Plan, Québec will shortly be adopting a long-term strategy for woodland caribou habitat management. The Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs is responsible for preparing the strategy, in collaboration with the other Government departments and agencies concerned.

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- ➔ Is identifying large areas in which efforts will be made to foster self-sufficiency for the woodland caribou:
 - by maintaining a habitat quality in areas that have not undergone much disturbance, and restoring disturbed forest areas used by the caribou.
 - By preparing new land development orientations and management methods in order to limit disturbances in target areas. For example:
 - as part of habitat restoration trials, dismantling and reforestation of nearly 80 km of multi-purpose roads, inspired by the Essipit Innu community's experimental habitat restoration project;
 - development of a new approach to implement harvesting operations, in order to reduce the long-term disturbance footprint and speed up the process of restoring favourable habitats for woodland caribou, among other things by ensuring that roads are dismantled after logging.
- ➔ Is analysing the impacts of different strategy implementation scenarios on habitat, the economy and employment.
- ➔ Is excluding from forest harvesting an area of more than 34,000km², and adapting forest management activities in order to maintain good quality habitats in 2018-2019.



PROTECTION EFFORTS AND TAILORED MANAGEMENT METHODS TO FOSTER CARIBOU HABITATS

To maintain a critical mass of suitable habitats to the woodland caribou, the Québec Government:

- ➔ Has drawn up a new northern boundary for timber allocations, effectively eliminating forest development activities from roughly 65% of the woodland caribou's range.
- ➔ Has announced the creation of the Broadback River protected area (9,134 km²).
- ➔ Has also announced the creation of the Manouane-Manicouagan woodland caribou protected area (10,194 km²).
- ➔ Is implementing the Sustainable Forest Management Regulation, which includes specific measures to protect woodland caribou habitat.



RIGOROUS LONG-TERM MONITORING OF WOODLAND CARIBOU POPULATIONS

To ensure that the measures set out in the Action Plan are successful, the Québec Government:

- ➔ Has provided a budget of \$7 million over three years to support long-term population monitoring. The budget will be used to:
 - triple the number of radio collars to more than 230, in order to monitor woodland caribou movements;
 - carry out new aerial surveys over a significant portion of the caribou range, including areas for which less information is currently available, in particular north of the boundary for timber allocations.
- ➔ Has implemented a stringent long-term population monitoring framework designed to:
 - improve knowledge of the caribou population's status and dynamics, demographic trends and mortality factors;
 - introduce management measures to promote self-sufficiency for certain populations, based in particular on experience with predator control;
 - collect data to assess the impacts of habitat protection measures on caribou populations and validate the management measures that will be implemented under the long-term strategy.
- ➔ In addition to banning sport hunting in 2001, the Government has also increased the number of awareness campaigns aimed at forest users, to promote behaviour that will reduce disturbances and mortality among woodland caribou.

A CONTINUOUS CONTRIBUTION FROM PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING THE FIRST NATIONS

The Québec Government holds discussions and conducts consultations to ensure that all the issues arising from woodland caribou protection are taken into account. Among other things, it uses:

- ➔ The Action Plan Partners' Panel, created in January 2017.
 - The Panel, which meets on a regular basis, is composed of representatives from the forestry industry, the municipalities, environmental groups, forestry unions and the First Nations concerned. It offers an excellent forum for dialogue on the members' concerns and on the strategy itself.
- ➔ The Québec-First Nations Panel, created in December 2017.
 - The Panel allows for collaboration with and contributions from the First Nations concerned, since the caribou is an important element of their cultures.
- ➔ Government and academic experts and the woodland caribou recovery team.
 - They are consulted on the scientific validity of the proposed approaches, and are also involved in some of the work.

In addition, the Québec Government maintains contacts with the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

- ➔ The Government of Canada has set up a woodland caribou discussion forum bringing together stakeholders from across Canada. Québec plays an active role in the forum.
- ➔ The Québec Government works closely with the provinces and territories concerned, with a view to benchmarking, pooling knowledge and identifying shared positions.