



Mountain Caribou Project groups have developed a checklist against which to measure the BC government's mountain caribou recovery plan.

1. Identification and protection of Critical Habitat

The BC mountain caribou science team identified approximately six million hectares of mountain caribou Critical habitat. About 2.5 million ha is Core habitat, and the rest is Matrix or Connectivity habitat. Only a fraction of caribou critical habitat, such as that within some parks, is currently fully protected from industrial activities. In other parks some motorized recreation is allowed, including snowmobiling and heli-skiing. Both Core and Matrix habitats are critical for caribou to avoid unsustainable predation and to maintain and/or restore herd connectivity or a "meta-population", which in turn is necessary for maintaining caribou genetic resilience.

Does the plan identify mountain caribou critical Core and Matrix habitat? Does it legally and permanently protect Core habitat? Does the plan include sufficient habitat areas to meet the population objectives in the plan, including recovery habitat where required?

2. Management of Matrix and Connectivity habitat

The Matrix and Connectivity habitat identified by the mountain caribou science team must be managed to maintain or restore it to condition that is both suitable for effective caribou movement between core habitat areas and undesirable as forage for other ungulate species. Current forest management regulations under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* are insufficient to ensure logging in caribou habitat is conducted in a manner that restores ecosystem balance and thereby protects caribou and other wildlife values. Matrix and Connectivity habitat must be designated as Wildlife Habitat Areas or a similar designation, with annual management plans submitted by all industrial users to the Ministry of Environment for approval.

Does the plan set clear legal targets for seral stage management (ie amounts of young and old forests) of Matrix and Connectivity habitat? Does the plan identify Matrix habitat in the southern areas? Does it include a robust planning and operational oversight process for Matrix and Connectivity habitat?

3. Access management and enforceable standards for motorized recreation

Heli-skiing and snowmobiling displace caribou from their preferred winter habitats at a time of year when caribou are most vulnerable due to increased nutritional demands. The BC mountain caribou science team and the Northern Recovery Implementation Group clearly identified areas that should be closed to winter recreation, including heli-skiing and snowmobiling, including some areas in parks where these activities are currently permitted. The mountain caribou science team has recommended no motorized recreation in caribou habitat for herds to achieve self-sustaining status. Lower

road densities across the planning area lessen the likelihood that caribou will be impacted by human activities and predation.

Does the plan include legislated access closures for motorized recreation? Does it include road density standards based on best available science?

4. Predator and prey management

Predator and prey management is ecologically unproven and socially controversial and should only be included as part of a comprehensive strategy that emphasizes the retention of old forests. Predators should only be targeted when there is a determination of immediate threat to caribou and where a caribou herd is smaller than 100 animals. Predator management will only be publicly acceptable if habitat is also protected, and other management tools such as maternity penning and diversionary feeding of predators are thoroughly considered and prioritized as preferable options where feasible. Both predator and prey management should be localized to areas where caribou occur.

Does the plan include clear criteria for predator and prey management activities?

5. Urgent measures including augmentation

The mountain caribou science team has identified the translocation of animals from robust caribou populations into smaller herds as a priority short-term action necessary to bolster herds with dangerously low numbers. Augmentation has been successful in the South Selkirks and will be necessary to maintain current caribou range. According to biologists herds with fewer than 75 animals are unlikely to recover without augmentation.

Does the plan include commitment to urgent measures, such as augmentation for small herds? Does it provide for experimentation with other measures where feasible, such as maternity penning?

6. A clear path forward, with sufficient funding and resources

British Columbians have a great deal invested in mountain caribou recovery. We deserve a recovery plan based on habitat protection, in combination with the management actions identified by the mountain caribou science team – a plan that includes clear recovery goals and identifies the legal/regulatory mechanisms and management actions necessary to achieve them. Land-use plans must be updated to reflect these protections and management actions, and to prevent industrial uses such as mining, and limit hydroelectric development, in caribou habitat.

British Columbians must be assured of the government's long-term commitment to recovery, including adequate funding of recovery actions and implementation mechanisms, an increase in compliance and enforcement capacity, and funding for monitoring the effectiveness of actions over time.

Does the plan clearly identify and give direction to the legal and regulatory mechanisms necessary to legally require mountain caribou recovery actions? Does the plan include a commitment to fully funding mountain caribou recovery?