



SUMMARY REPORT ON
COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE
**PROPOSED ACTION PLAN
FOR THE WOODLAND CARIBOU
(RANGIFER TARANDUS CARIBOU),
BOREAL POPULATION, IN
CANADA - FEDERAL ACTIONS**

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BACKGROUND

The proposed “Action Plan for the Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), Boreal Population, in Canada - Federal Actions” was posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry on July 27, 2017 for a 60-day public comment period that ended on September 25, 2017.

To provide interested parties with a better understanding of the proposed action plan, Environment and Climate Change Canada hosted four information sessions by webinar between September 6 and 8, 2017. Two webinars were presented in French and two in English, which were attended by over 250 people. In total, over 80 written comments were received from provinces and territories, Wildlife Management Boards, Indigenous peoples, municipal governments, stakeholders, and individual Canadians.

The final “Action Plan for the Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), Boreal Population, in Canada - Federal Actions” establishes a framework for action in areas where federal leadership is most beneficial or is required under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). It describes the measures that are being, or will be taken by the federal government to implement the 2012 Recovery Strategy, to help achieve the population and distribution objectives for the species, and address identified threats. The measures are summarized under three pillars: knowledge to support recovery; recovery and protection; and reporting on progress.

WHAT WE HEARD: OVERVIEW OF THE COMMENTS RECEIVED

The comments received were helpful for Environment and Climate Change Canada to gain a better understanding of the perspectives, ideas, questions, and concerns of partners and interested parties. Some of the comments received did not result in a change to the Action Plan as they are more applicable to provincial or territorial recovery planning documents, range planning processes or on-going engagement efforts. Other comments have been noted for consideration in future research, planning and reports. The main themes of comments received on the Action Plan include:

- Broad agreement on the need for the Action Plan and federal leadership to recover boreal caribou.
- Support for continued research as long as it is not at the expense of recovery and protection action on the ground.
- Indigenous Knowledge should be considered throughout all recovery measures.
- Regional differences should be considered in research, monitoring and assessment.
- Science to support recovery should consider the importance of caribou health monitoring, assessing cumulative effects on caribou populations, new fire delineations and jurisdictional differences in approaches and standards for identification of ranges.
- On-going consultation and engagement is required with all partners and interested parties, including Wildlife Management Boards and Indigenous peoples, to ensure success especially in the development of conservation agreements, protection of critical habitat, range planning activities, the development of reports, and invitations to participate in committees and national workshops.

- A socio-economic analysis needs to be undertaken to demonstrate the costs and benefits associated with various recovery options.
- The proposal for a National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium is a positive and worthwhile idea that has generated significant interest and requests for participation; additional information on the mandate, function, and membership is needed.
- Questions on how new information will be incorporated and whether it will influence the identification of critical habitat.
- There is a need for added clarity around the statement “designated adaptive management ranges where experimentation will be encouraged”, and some concern over the use of experimentation in highly disturbed ranges. Precautionary approach needed.
- There is support for landscape-level approaches to recovery that lead to co-benefits for multiple species, with regional and species differences taken into consideration.
- While there is support for the use of conservation agreements, there is concern regarding the extent to which they will constitute effective protection of the species when applied.
- There is on-going concern over the delay on the part of provinces and territories in meeting SARA requirements for critical habitat protection.
- Funding should be provided for stewardship opportunities related to boreal caribou; more information is requested on funding resources and how the federal government will support recovery projects.

EDITS MADE TO THE DOCUMENT

Pillar 1: Knowledge to Support Recovery

- Pillar 1 was changed to “Knowledge to Support Recovery” to recognize that knowledge in the context of the Action Plan is inclusive of both science as practiced in a western science method and Indigenous Knowledge.
- Information on the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium was added to indicate that the process of building the Consortium has been initiated and will continue in 2018. Mechanisms to ensure opportunities for participation at regional and local levels will also be investigated. The official launch of the Consortium is targeted for June 2018.
- A new recovery measure was added to provide clarity and additional information on the establishment of a network of adaptive management ranges and pilot areas.
- The 17th North American Caribou Workshop will be held in Ottawa, ON from October 29-November 2, 2018 with the theme of “Working Together”. This workshop is open to all interested parties (<http://www.nacw2018.ca/>).

Pillar 2: Recovery and Protection

- **Range Plans:** Text was added on the status of range plans in each province and territory.
- **Measures proposed to protect critical habitat on non-federal lands:** Text was updated to clarify that ECCC seeks to establish conservation agreements between the Government of Canada and each province and territory, and other parties where appropriate, to formalize commitments each party is making to protect and recover boreal caribou.
- **Measures proposed to protect critical habitat on federally-administered lands:** Clarification was provided that SARA section 58 will be used to provide protection on federally-administered lands.
- **Critical Habitat Identification in Northern Saskatchewan's Boreal Shield (SK1) Range:** The timeline for identification of critical habitat in SK1 was changed from Spring 2018 to Summer 2018.
- **Stewardship:** Wording regarding stewardship funding was changed to acknowledge that the protection and recovery of boreal caribou and its critical habitat will continue to be a priority for the federal government to fund through the Habitat Stewardship Program, the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk, and other funding mechanisms.

Pillar 3: Reporting on Progress

- **5-Year Report on Recovery Strategy Implementation:** This was updated to reflect that the report was posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry on October 31, 2017.

The final version of the Action Plan is now available on the Species at Risk Public Registry at:

http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=407