



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The B.C. government partnered with the Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations and the federal government to achieve a historic agreement that strives to protect southern mountain caribou in the northeastern part of their range while considering the social and economic well-being of communities and stakeholders in the region. The partnership agreement, signed on February 21, 2020, reflects a collaborative approach to caribou conservation, which:

- Complements the leadership role that the Saulteau First Nation and West Moberly First Nations have already taken on caribou recovery efforts in the Peace region
- Includes a commitment to protect over 700,000 hectares of important caribou habitat in northeastern B.C. from resource development and
- Builds on the work that the parties have already undertaken in habitat restoration, maternal penning projects, and predator management. Through these efforts, the decline of the central group has been reversed. The population is now growing at an average rate of 15% per year

Caribou recovery in B.C. is a complex and challenging issue. There are no simple solutions and we have learned from experience that success is dependent on a unique blend of short- and long-term management actions built on a foundation of sound science and meaningful effort by deeply involved parties.

The draft plan has been developed based on peer reviewed research, recommendations from the South Peace Snowmobile Advisory Committee, input from caribou subject matter experts and aboriginal knowledge on caribou. This is a draft plan about caribou recovery. You may not agree with the objective of caribou recovery, or you may not agree with the approaches proposed in this plan. These are perfectly valid opinions that we welcome you to share in this engagement. I encourage you to be factual and respectful when providing your feedback or spreading the word on this important initiative. Racist or hateful language has no place in this process, or our province and will not be tolerated. Any discriminatory feedback received will not be considered and will be followed up with appropriately.

Thoughtful feedback has been provided already on the draft plan including concerns of the consequences of proposed closures on access to areas that remain open, seasonal variation in snowpack impacting the use or access of some areas, and using adaptive management in areas that have future plans for reintroductions of caribou. This is useful feedback that will help us develop a final plan.

I encourage you to become involved by reviewing the plan and supporting materials and providing comments. Thoughtful input and feedback are required to ensure the finalized plan provides a balanced approach that recognizes the significant investment in Caribou recovery while continuing to provide for a high value snowmobiling experience.

Sincerely,



Russ Laroche
Executive Director
Species at Risk Recovery
Ministry of Forests, Land, Natural Resource Operation and Rural Development



WINTER MOTORIZED RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN IN THE SOUTH PEACE

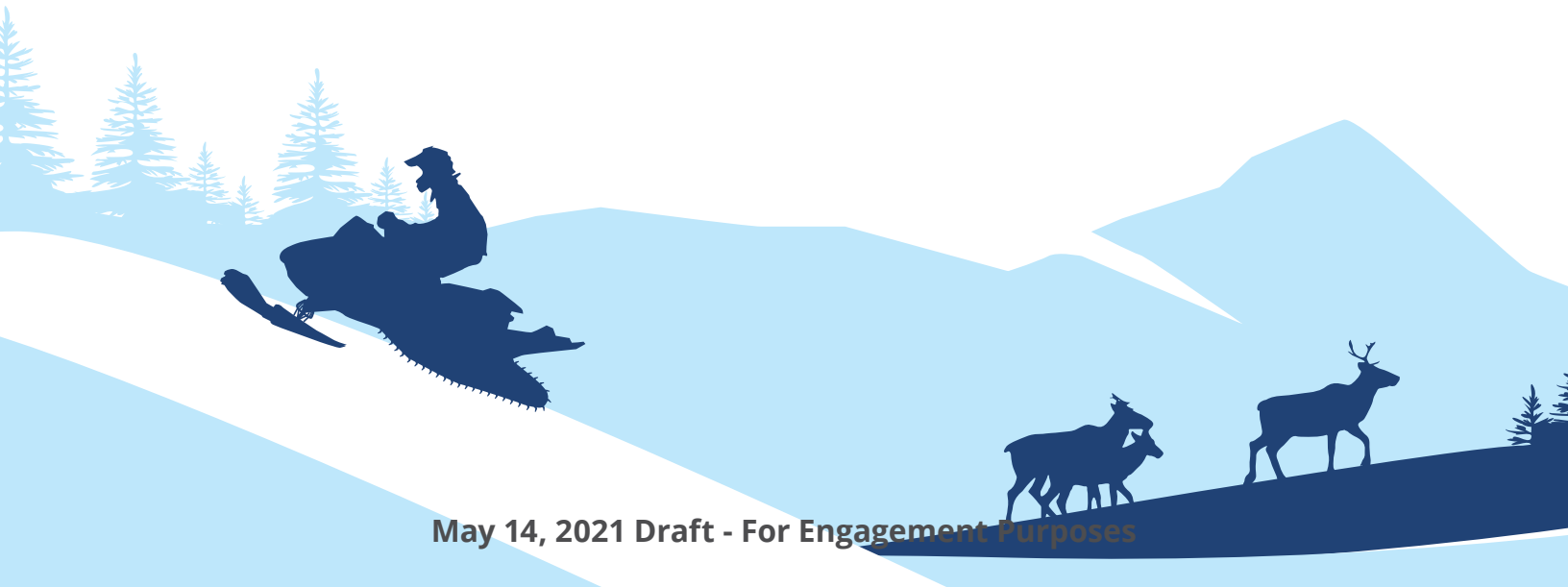
MAY 14, 2021



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Southern Mountain Caribou, including the herds within the Central Group, have experienced significant population declines over the past three generations. On February 21, 2020, the Governments of British Columbia, Canada, West Moberly First Nations, and Saulteau First Nation (the Parties) signed the [Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group to the Southern Mountain Caribou](#) (Partnership Agreement) in accordance with Section 11 of the Species at Risk Act. This agreement specifies the actions that the Parties have agreed to take to achieve the shared recovery objective of: *“Immediately stabilizing and expeditiously growing the population of the Central Group to levels that are self-sustaining and support traditional aboriginal harvesting activities, consistent with existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights”,* while considering the social and economic well-being of communities and stakeholders in the region.

Clause 37 of the Partnership Agreement states British Columbia’s responsibility to:

“Develop and implement a management plan for motorized recreation to achieve the Shared Recovery Objective for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. The design and implementation of the management plan will be undertaken jointly with representatives of the other Parties, and in consultation with technical experts, First Nations, local governments, and snowmobile clubs. The management plan may provide for the restriction of recreational motor vehicle access within prescribed areas of caribou habitat, the enhancement of recreational facilities in appropriate areas, and other measures consistent with similar plans in British Columbia”.

Winter motorized recreation occurs widely throughout the planning area and is a highly valued recreational activity and a current and future driver of the South Peace Region’s winter visitor economy. Though not the primary threat to caribou recovery, winter motorized recreation in alpine and subalpine caribou habitat can displace and disturb caribou during sensitive periods and increase predation. Impacts on caribou from winter motorized recreation act cumulatively with other primary threats (e.g., habitat loss, predator / prey dynamics) and can further stress the well-being of the animals and their recovery.

Known as the *Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace*, the purpose of this plan is to identify the measures being considered to manage winter motorized recreation to support the achievement of the Shared Recovery Objective for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. Through this planning and ensuing regulatory changes, new direct and indirect management measures would be applied throughout the planning area which includes the herd boundaries for the Klinse-za (previously, Scott & Moberly), Kennedy Siding, Burnt Pine, Quintette and Narraway herds.

Direct management measures that would be implemented through this plan include the establishment of:

- Full-season Closure Areas,
- Partial-season Closure Areas,
- Active Management Areas, and
- Enhancement Areas.



In addition to the direct management measures above, indirect management measures including the development of a comprehensive education and communications program, deliberate parking area snow removal program, installation of signage and compliance monitoring patrols and enforcement would be applied.

Implementation of the management measures would occur through an Adaptive Management approach which would be based on the monitoring of desired resource conditions and established indicators. The plan would be reviewed every 4 years except for 6 areas (Core Lodge, Bullmoose, Powder King, Hasler, Silversands, Wolverine) of particularly important caribou habitat and high value riding, which would receive more intensive monitoring and would be reviewed after an initial 2-year period. If monitoring shows that conditions are challenging the shared recovery objective, or if exceptional / unexpected circumstances arise during the initial monitoring period, the BC Government would work with the winter motorized recreation organizations and the Parties to identify an appropriate management response which could include, but may not be limited to, voluntary solutions and/or regulatory changes. Any regulatory changes would include Indigenous consultation and public and stakeholder engagement before being implemented.

The management of winter motorized recreation is one of several caribou recovery planning processes and initiatives that are currently underway for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. BC is committed to a suite of ongoing recovery actions including, but not limited to, predator management, maternity penning, supplemental feeding, habitat restoration, industrial development moratoriums throughout the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. These actions would continue to inform the adaptive management of winter motorized recreation as this Plan is implemented.

ENGAGEMENT & REVIEW

Comments and input will be used to finalize the Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace which is anticipated to be implemented in October 2021.

engage.bc.ca/caribou/

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLANNING CONTEXT

Southern Mountain Caribou, including the herds within the Central Group, have experienced significant population declines over the past three generations. On February 21, 2020, the Governments of British Columbia, Canada, West Moberly First Nations, and Saulteau First Nation (the Parties) signed the [Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group to the Southern Mountain Caribou](#) (Partnership Agreement)¹ in accordance with Section 11 of the Species at Risk Act. This agreement specifies the actions that the Parties have agreed to take to achieve the shared recovery objective of: “Immediately stabilizing and expeditiously growing the population of the Central Group to levels that are self-sustaining and support traditional aboriginal harvesting activities, consistent with existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights”, while considering the social and economic well-being of communities and stakeholders in the region.

SHARED RECOVERY OBJECTIVE

“Immediately stabilizing and expeditiously growing the population of the Central Group to levels that are self-sustaining and support traditional aboriginal harvesting activities, consistent with existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights”

Clause 37 of the Partnership Agreement states British Columbia’s responsibility to:

“Develop and implement a management plan for motorized recreation to achieve the Shared Recovery Objective for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. The design and implementation of the management plan will be undertaken jointly with representatives of the other Parties, and in consultation with technical experts, First Nations, local governments, and snowmobile clubs. The management plan may provide for the restriction of recreational motor vehicle access within prescribed areas of caribou habitat, the enhancement of recreational facilities in appropriate areas, and other measures consistent with similar plans in British Columbia”.

Given existing prohibitions on motorized vehicle use in large areas of high elevation in the South Peace, which exclude snowmobiling, the potential for winter motorized recreation to negatively impact caribou, and the importance of winter motorized recreation to residents in the region and the regional tourism economy, priority was given to the development of a plan focused on the management of **winter** motorized recreation.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this draft plan, known as the *Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace* (henceforth, the Plan), is to identify the measures being considered to manage winter motorized recreation to support the achievement of the Shared Recovery Objective for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou.

1.3 PLANNING AREA & SCOPE

The planning area includes the herd boundaries for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou in BC (Figure 1) including the Klinse-za (previously, Scott & Moberly), Kennedy Siding, Burnt Pine, Quintette and Narraway herds.

The Plan is focused on the management of winter motorized recreation. For the purposes of the Plan, “winter” refers to the period between November 1 – May 14 annually. “Motorized recreation” includes any recreation involving a “motor vehicle”. Consistent with the definition set in the *Motor Vehicle Prohibition Regulation*, a motor vehicle is defined as a device in, on or by which a person or thing is being or may be transported or drawn, and which is designed to be self propelled. For the purposes of the Plan, a motor vehicle includes tracked or un-tracked all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, off-road motorcycles, class 2 or 3 e-bikes², and motor vehicles licensed for highway use under the *Motor Vehicle Act*. For the purposes of the Plan, “recreation” includes non-commercial activities and commercial tourism operations.

Management measures (i.e. closures) identified in this plan do not apply to:

- Non-motorized winter or summer recreation,
- Non-winter motorized recreation,
- A person who uses or operates a winter motorized vehicle for a commercial purpose other than hunting or commercial back country recreation,
- Emergency response,
- Approved caribou recovery and resource management activities, and
- Commercial or private aviation.

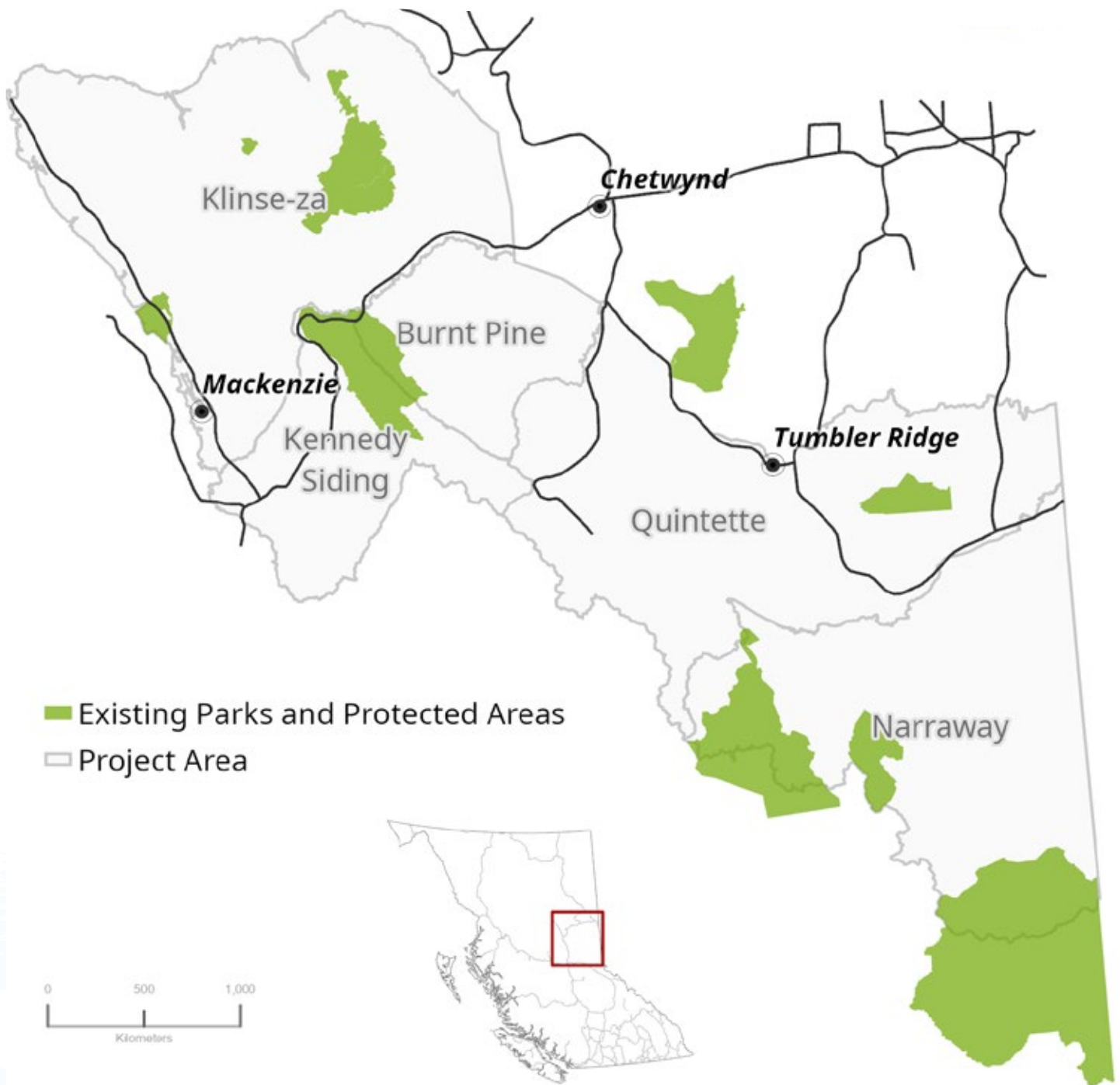


Figure 1 Study Area

1.4 PLANNING PROCESS

Between January and May 2020, the Government of British Columbia hosted a series of meetings with representatives from snowmobiling clubs, the BC Snowmobiling Federation, local and regional governments, and the four Parties to the Partnership Agreement. Following those initial meetings, between May 2020 and January 2021, the Government of British Columbia engaged directly with the South Peace Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SPSAC). Representing snowmobile clubs and local and regional governments in the planning area, the SPSAC held 13 meetings and donated over 450 hours of volunteer time to prepare a comprehensive report outlining their

recommendations to the Province on the measures that should be taken to manage the impacts of winter motorized recreation on caribou in the planning area³. The complete SPSAC report is available [here](#). Upon receiving the SPSAC's recommendations in February 2021, British Columbia and the other Parties worked collaboratively to prepare this draft Plan, which was released in May 2021 for public and stakeholder input and First Nations consultation. Following consideration of that input, and in collaboration with the other Parties, British Columbia intends to finalize the Plan by the fall of 2021, with implementation beginning in the winter of 2021-22.



Figure 2 Planning Process

1.5 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER CARIBOU PLANNING & RECOVERY INITIATIVES

The management of winter motorized recreation is one of several caribou recovery planning processes and initiatives that are currently underway for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. BC is committed to a suite of ongoing recovery actions including, but not limited to, predator management, maternity penning, supplemental feeding, habitat restoration, industrial development moratoriums throughout the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. These actions would continue to inform the adaptive management of winter motorized recreation as this Plan is implemented.





2 PLANNING OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES

2.1 OBJECTIVES

Consistent with the Partnership Agreement, the primary objective of the Plan is to:

Manage winter motorized recreation in a manner that supports the achievement of the Shared Recovery Objective.

The secondary objectives of the Plan, where they do not conflict with or detract from the ability to achieve the primary objective, are to:

Maintain use of the highest value and most unique winter motorized recreation areas and a diverse mix of winter motorized recreation opportunities in the region.

Support the development or enhancement of winter motorized recreation destinations in areas that likely represent a low risk to caribou recovery, in order to support the region's winter motorized recreation visitor economy.

2.2 PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The following planning principles guided the development of the Plan:

- The Plan must make a positive contribution to the Shared Recovery Objective.
- The Plan must be informed by the best available western science and Indigenous knowledge.
- The Plan must consider, based on the best available information, both the current use and potential future habitat needs of caribou.
- To extent practical, the Plan must identify opportunities to offset some of the losses of winter motorized recreation opportunities through the creation of new or enhanced opportunities in areas that have no, or low impact to caribou or other resource values.
- The Plan must apply a consistent, integrated, and comprehensive recreation management approach that includes regulations, engineering, education, enforcement, and evaluation.
- The Plan must be informed through meaningful, transparent, inclusive, and anti-racist Indigenous consultation and public, stakeholder, and local and regional government engagement.
- The management measures must be able to be easily understood and easily communicated to the public.
- The management measures must be able to be implemented through existing British Columbia legislative and regulatory tools and should be consistent with measures applied elsewhere in the province.



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CENTRAL GROUP OF SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN CARIBOU



Figure 3 Herd Boundaries

The Southern Mountain population of Woodland Caribou (“Southern Mountain Caribou”) was listed as Threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* in 2003. Southern Mountain Caribou includes the Northern Group, Central Group, and Southern Group. The Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou, which is the focus of the Plan, includes the following five herds within British Columbia (Figure 3):

- Klinse-za (previously, Scott & Moberly)
- Kennedy Siding
- Burnt Pine
- Quintette
- Narraway

It should be noted that the “Scott West” herd range and some herds in Alberta are also part of the Central Group but are not within the scope of this Plan.

As of April 2021, 296 animals observed in the five herds listed above⁴. As illustrated in Figure 4, the population sizes vary by herd. Southern Mountain Caribou, including the herds within the Central Group, have experienced significant population declines over the past three generations⁵. The most recent five years of monitoring suggests that over the short term, population sizes are increasing within the Kennedy Siding, Klinse-Za, and Quintette herds, and stable at very low numbers in the Narraway herd. The Burnt Pine herd is believed to have been extirpated since 2014, although the Kennedy Siding herd sometimes use the Burnt Pine range (Figure 4)⁶.

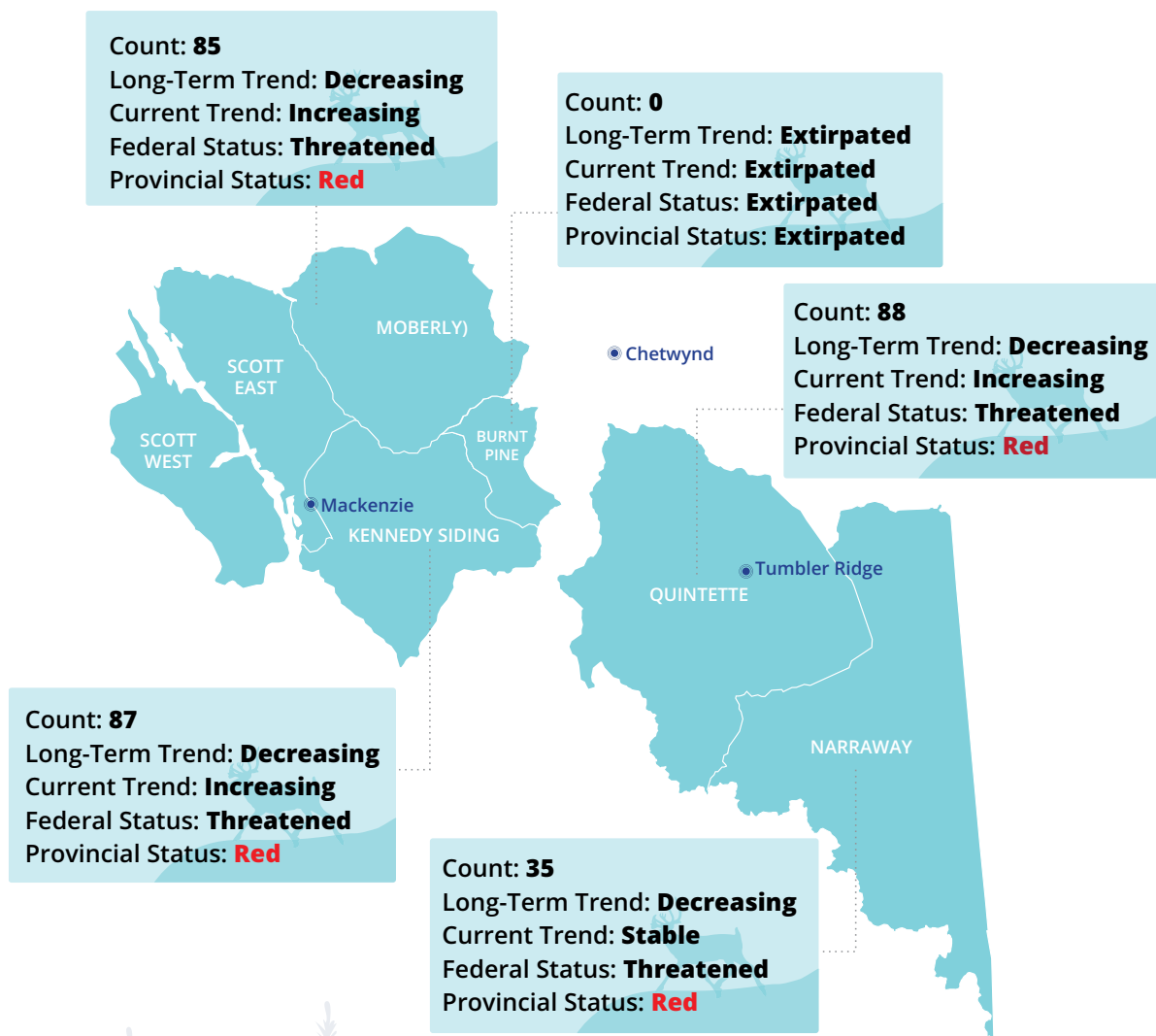


Figure 4 Herd Boundaries and Status

Though the short-term current population trend in the Central Group is increasing or stable, it is important to recognize that these population increases are a result of intensive management actions including maternity penning, supplemental feeding, and predator control. The long-term population trend for all herds in the Central Group indicates that these herds are decreasing. Given the small population sizes following significant declines, all herds in the Central Group are highly susceptible to mortality events associated with predation, disturbance, and avalanches.

3.1 CARIBOU HABITAT

Though winter habitat preferences and patterns vary by herd, in general, caribou in the Central Group primarily utilize high-elevation habitats for winter range. The animals migrate between alpine and sub-alpine habitats where they typically feed on terrestrial lichens on wind-blown slopes, or crater (dig) to access lichens that are buried by snow, or arboreal lichens (on trees) where they are available^{7,8,9,10}. During the winter, caribou tend to prefer moderately sloped or ridgeline topography.

Caribou require large tracts of range where they can separate themselves from other prey and predators, and shift their range use in response to natural processes (e.g. fire, forest insects, weather/snow conditions) and human activities (e.g. disturbance from forest harvesting, mining, oil and gas, and recreation). The quality, intactness and connectivity of caribou habitat has declined because of land use and human activities.

Mapping of caribou habitat changes over time. For this Plan, the Parties agreed to merge provincial and federal habitat data to produce a single caribou habitat dataset that identifies core, matrix, and currently used habitat.

CORE HABITAT

British Columbia defines core habitat as the area needed to provide sufficient range to support the life requirements of caribou across all seasons and allowing for movements on the landscape over time in response to human caused or natural habitat disturbance. The following categories of range are considered core habitat (Figure 5):

- High Elevation Winter Range (HEWR)
- High Elevation Summer and Winter Range (HESWR)
- High Elevation Summer Range (HESR)
- Low Elevation Winter Range (LEWR)

These habitats, identified using information from radio-collared caribou, are important to caribou now and are expected to continue to be important to caribou as the populations recover over time. As the animals begin to increase their range from what they currently use, other habitats could become more important than they are now.

MATRIX HABITAT

Matrix habitat is the area adjacent to core habitat that has periodic or low use by caribou but supports primary prey (e.g., deer, moose) and associated predators (e.g. wolves) that have the potential to affect caribou and the quality of core habitat.

CURRENTLY USED HABITAT

In addition to understanding the distribution of core and matrix habitats, telemetry data from radio-collared caribou was analysed to understand which habitat some caribou currently use and when they use that habitat. To inform the Plan, telemetry data collected over the most recent 5 years were analysed through Kernel Density Estimation (KDE 95%). Recognizing that the number of animals collared in each herd varies and there are technical limitations associated with radio-collars and telemetry data, telemetry data from the winter months between Jan 1, 2016 to April 1, 2021 was used to identify current use habitats for each period of the winter:

- early winter (November 1-January 14),
- later winter (January 15 – March 31),
- spring (April 1 – May 14), and
- all winter (November 1 – May 14) (Figure 6).



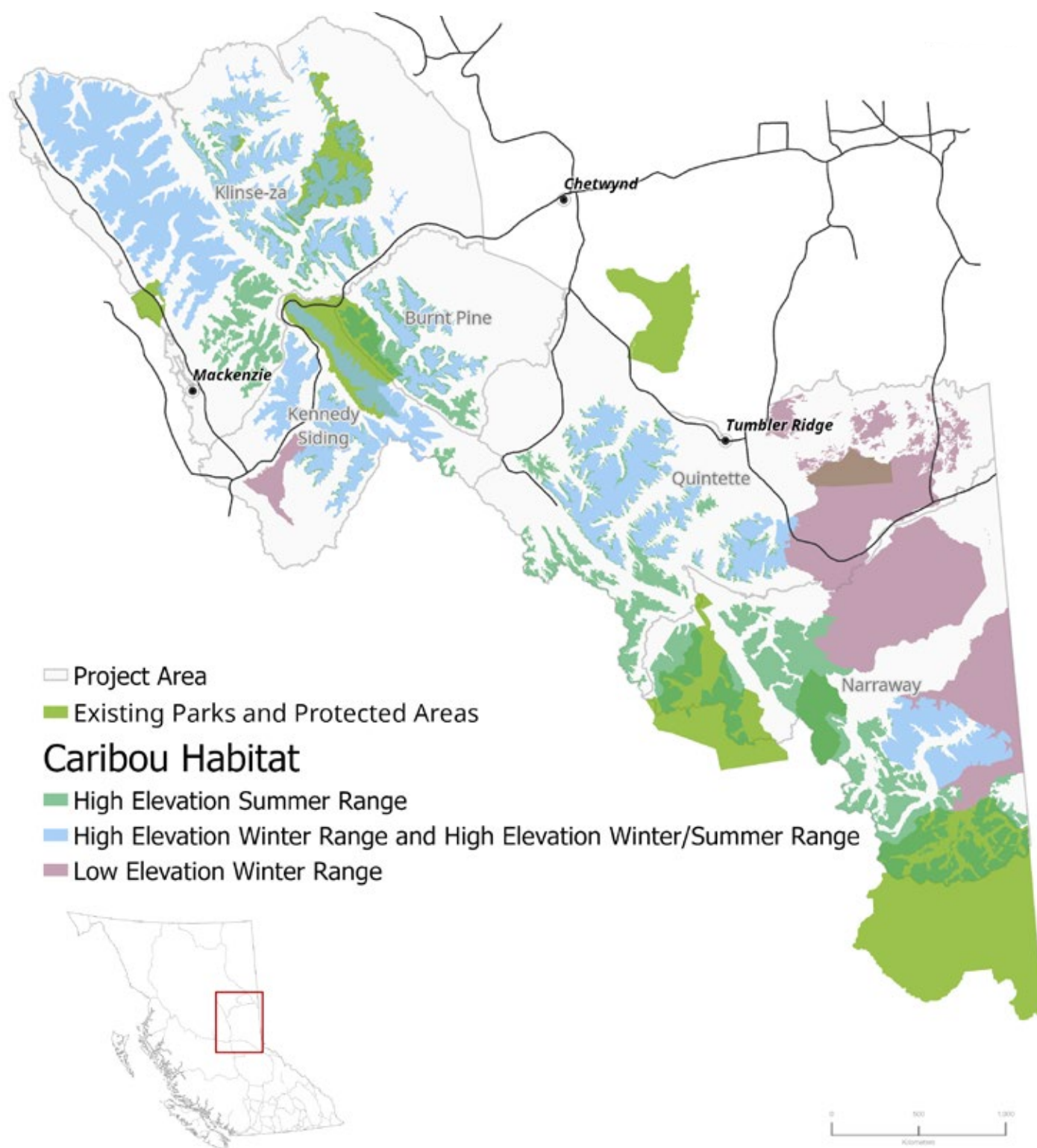


Figure 5 High Elevation & Low Elevation Winter Range

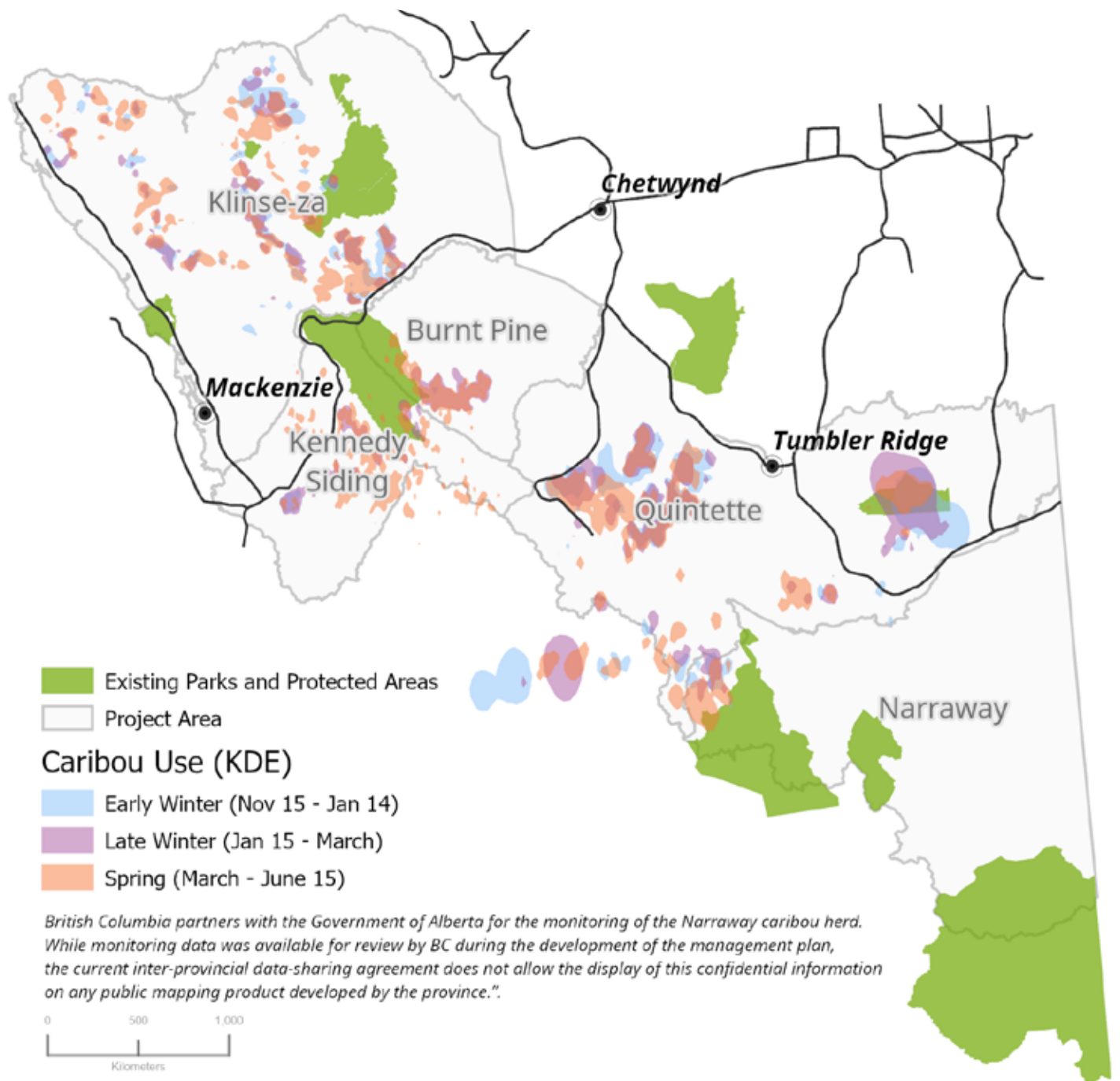


Figure 6 KDE 95 by Time Period Combination

3.2 THREATS TO CARIBOU

Population declines in Southern Mountain Caribou, including the Central Group, are due to increased predation, which has been linked to human-caused habitat disturbance^{11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21}. Industrial, commercial, and recreational land uses combined with natural disturbances such as forest fires and insect outbreaks have caused high levels of habitat disturbance in many areas. Herds with highly disturbed habitats and younger forests within their ranges have lower survival rates. With more young forest on the landscape, the densities of predators and their prey have increased. Linear corridors such as roads and trails allow predators to travel faster and more efficiently through the landscape. Direct disturbance from industrial, commercial, and recreational activities can also displace caribou into areas where they are at higher risk of predation.

The currently available evidence does not support the characterization of climate change as a primary driver of southern mountain caribou declines. However, climate change, forest insects, and wildfire also contribute to changes in habitat quality and distribution. The effects of these changes contribute to the cumulative effects of direct human activities on southern mountain caribou habitat. Avalanches, parasites, diseases and other natural causes of mortality can also negatively affect southern mountain caribou populations.

PRIMARY THREATS TO CARIBOU

- Increased predation
- Habitat loss and disturbance
- Displacement from preferred range



4 WINTER MOTORIZED RECREATION IN THE PLANNING AREA

Winter motorized recreation occurs widely throughout the planning area and is a highly valued recreational activity and a current and future driver of the South Peace Region's winter visitor economy. Understanding the diversity and distribution of winter motorized recreation opportunities was fundamental to the planning process. A winter motorized recreation opportunity is defined as the ability for a rider to take part in their desired riding discipline, at the desired level of difficulty, within the desired recreation setting and riding terrain and appropriate snow conditions (Figure 7).

These components come together in different combinations throughout the planning area to create the wide diversity of winter motorized recreation opportunities that the region is known for. When this framework is applied, it becomes clear that the region provides opportunities for all riding disciplines, all difficulty levels, in all recreation settings and in a diversity of landscapes from high alpine to lower elevation forested areas, lakes and cutblocks. While the volume of available riding area has been reduced through the Plan, the planning process has paid careful attention to ensuring a similar diversity of winter motorized recreation opportunities are still available to both residents of and visitors.



Figure 7 Elements of a Snowmobiling Experience

The planning area contains 3 distinct winter motorized recreation riding regions (Figure 8):

- Chetwynd Riding Region
- Mackenzie Riding Region
- Tumbler Ridge Riding Region

Each riding region contains multiple smaller riding areas. In total, twenty-one (21) individual riding areas, equating to approximately 469,562 ha of land, were identified through in-depth engagement with the South Peace Snowmobile Advisory Committee (Figure 8). Though winter motorized recreation occurs broadly throughout the planning areas, these riding areas are the land bases that are most popular for winter motorized recreation and experience the most intense visitation. For further details on each of the riding areas, please review the [SPSAC report here](#).

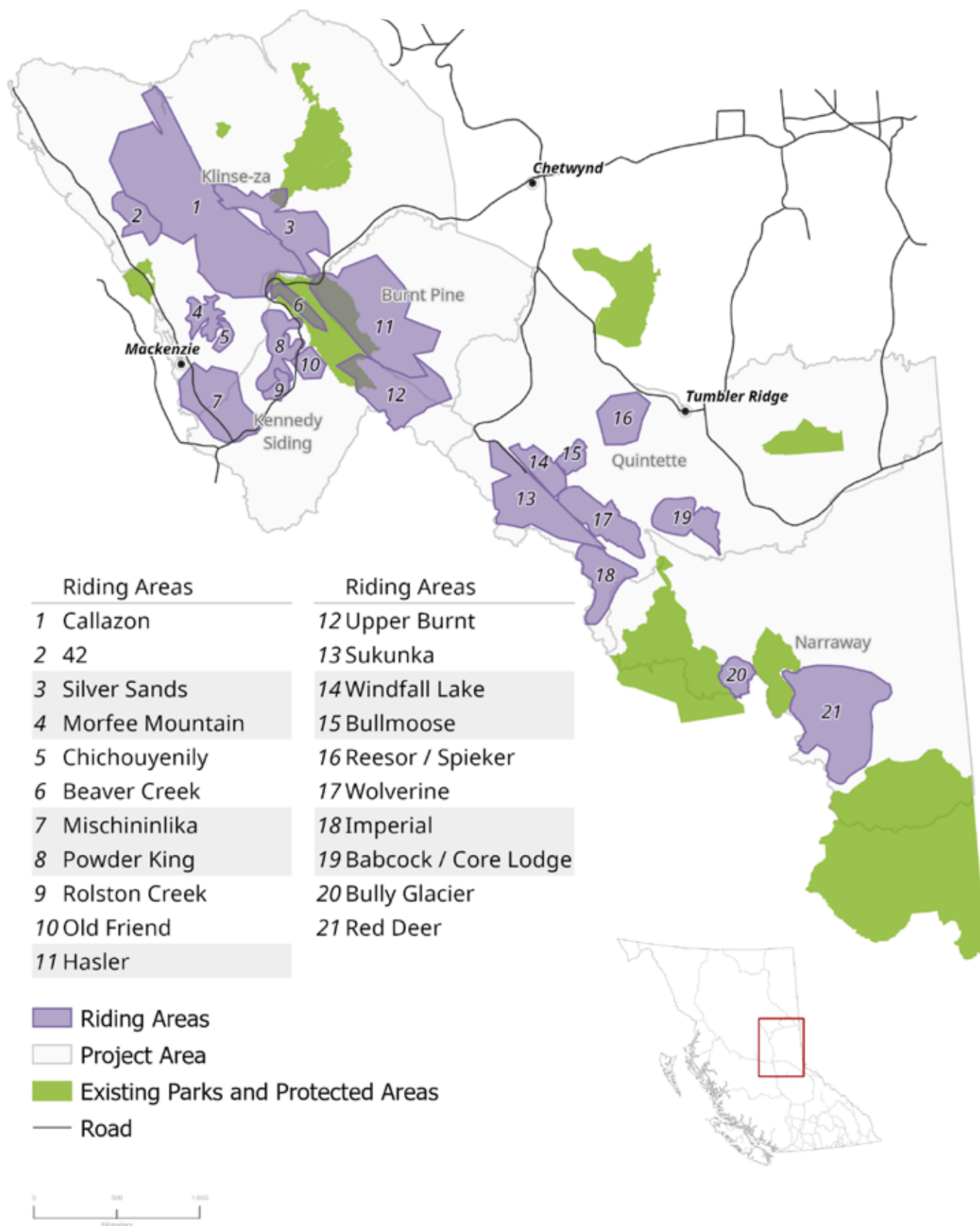


Figure 8 Riding Regions and Riding Areas

4.1 WINTER MOTORIZED RECREATION & IMPACTS ON CARIBOU

Though not the primary threat to caribou recovery, the impacts on caribou from winter motorized recreation act cumulatively with other primary threats (e.g., habitat loss, predator / prey dynamics) and further stress the well-being of the animals and their recovery. This is especially true when herds are small and in a state of long-term decline like the Central Group. Mountain caribou breed in late September and October, meaning that cow caribou are pregnant over the winter months when the availability of food is limited, and travel is difficult. This directly overlaps the prime winter motorized recreation season. Caribou responses to motorized vehicles and humans vary across different situations, including differences between individual caribou or groups of caribou; and not all responses are obvious or easily measurable. The best available science suggests that winter motorized recreation in alpine and subalpine caribou habitat can:

DISPLACE CARIBOU^{22,23,24}

- The presence of and noise from winter motorized vehicles can displace caribou into sub-optimal habitat or into areas where risk of mortality is higher. Displacement can increase mortality through predation, natural events (avalanche), increased energy expenditure during energy deficient periods, or by pushing caribou into areas that have less forage. In general, caribou avoid motorized vehicles while they are in use, and avoid winter motorized trails.
- Though some research suggests that caribou may get used to (habituated) motorized vehicle use and minimize their avoidance or displacement responses, the likelihood of habituation is highly variable and not a definite outcome.

DISTURB CARIBOU^{25,26,27,28}

- Noise and the presence of humans and motorized vehicles can create frequent disturbances to caribou. When caribou move to avoid the disturbance, their energy expenditures and / or level of stress hormones increase. Increased energy expenditures can put the animal at risk as travel in the winter is already challenging while the food supply to replace expended energy can be limited.

INCREASE PREDATION^{29,30}

- As outlined above, caribou can be displaced into habitats where interactions with predators and mortality may increase.
- In addition, areas and trails frequently used by winter motorized vehicles packs the snow. Harder packed snow allows predators to move through the landscape more frequently and efficiently in the winter and can provide access to caribou range. With caribou forced into smaller areas of core habitat, predators can more easily locate caribou which can result in greater mortality.

4.2 REGULATORY & NON-REGULATORY MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR WINTER MOTORIZED RECREATION: PRECEDENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Currently in the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou, motor vehicle closures implemented through the *Wildlife Act's Motor Vehicle Prohibition Regulation* are in place in the Bullmoose Chamberlain area. All motorized recreation is prohibited above 1,524m elevation. In addition, the *Parks, Conservation, Recreation Areas Regulation* under the Parks Act restricts the use of snowmobiles and motorized vehicles in Bocock Peak Provincial Park, Klin-se-za Provincial Park, Monkman Provincial Park, Wapiti Provincial Park, Gwillim Lake Provincial Park, Bearhole Lake Provincial Park and Protected Area, and the Northern areas of Kakwa Provincial Park.

In addition to the South Peace Region, the Government of British Columbia has legally restricted winter motorized recreation in the range of the Southern Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. These management measures arose from the [2007 Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan](#). The Government of British Columbia has established stewardship management agreements with several snowmobile organizations in these areas to provide public and snowmobile rider education, recommendations for riding in caribou habitat where prohibitions are not in place, assist with compliance promotion for closed areas, and in some cases, promote voluntary closures. Examples include:

CENTRAL SELKIRKS

In the winter of 2019-20, a pilot project was launched for the [Central Selkirks](#), which grants access to legally closed areas on days that caribou are not present in the riding area. Legal permission is provided through exemption permits to two local snowmobile clubs and their members. This reflects a unique situation where a high proportion of caribou in a small herd are collared and use the landscape in predictable ways.

TELKWA

In the area of the Telkwa caribou herd, a management plan is in place where motorized and non-motorized backcountry users are asked to monitor a [Facebook page](#) for information on the location of collared caribou, and avoid relevant areas through both voluntary and legal closures; this area is now managed similarly to Central Selkirks (i.e. legally closed, with exemption permits).

FRISBY RIDGE

In the area of the Frisby Ridge near Revelstoke, the local snowmobile club promotes a voluntary closure between January 1 and April 15.



5

PLANNING FRAMEWORK & BOUNDARY REFINEMENT

5.1 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A planning framework (henceforth, the Framework) was used to guide discussions and recommendations about which management measures were most appropriate to be applied in which areas of caribou habitat. More specifically, the Framework supported the recommendations for riding area closures (full and partial season), active management areas, and enhancement areas; each of which are further described in section 6.0.

Inputs to the Framework included mapped high elevation winter range and high elevation winter and summer range, telemetry-based evidence of current use by caribou in winter (KDE 95%), and descriptions and boundaries of riding areas and management action recommendations from the SPSAC. The Framework can be summarized as follows:

- All areas within the planning area that do not overlap either high elevation winter range, high elevation winter and summer range, and / or currently used habitat are proposed to be open for winter motorized recreation. For clarity, the open areas include high elevation summer range and low elevation winter range that is not currently used.
- All high elevation winter range, high elevation winter summer range and current use habitat (KDE 95%) that is not overlapped by a riding area identified by the SPSAC are proposed to be brought forward for a decision to legally close the area to winter motorized recreation (i.e. full-season closure).
- All areas that were recommended for a full closure by the SPSAC are proposed as full-season closures.
- Riding areas that overlap high elevation winter range, high elevation winter and summer range, and / or currently used habitat, and were proposed by the SPSAC for partial closures or active management, were reviewed in detail by the Parties. A number of direct and indirect management measures are proposed for these areas which are discussed in detail in section 6.
- Enhancement areas were identified in locations that avoid habitat that is currently used by caribou during the winter, contain high value winter motorized recreation opportunity, are relatively easy to access for major travel corridors or communities and have received investment winter motorized recreation infrastructure investments in the past.



5.2 REFINING THE BOUNDARIES FOR DIRECT MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Application of the Framework identified general areas for the application of management measures. In areas where full-season closures, partial-season closures, or active management are proposed, detailed boundaries were refined to ensure areas could be easily identified by both the public and enforcement officers. The following parameters were used to refine the boundaries:

- Elevation contours (typically 1200 m, 1400m, and 1524m),
- Boundaries of core and currently used habitats,
- Landscape features (e.g. ridges, drainages), and
- Built features (e.g. cutblocks, roads, trails, powerlines).



6

MANAGEMENT MEASURES

6.1 MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Five categories of direct management measures would be applied in the region, including:

- Full-season Closure Areas
- Partial-season Closure Areas
- Active Management Areas
- Enhancement Areas

Each of these management measures is described below. In addition to direct management measures, the plan identifies a range of indirect management measures (e.g. education, promotion) which would be applied throughout the entire area. The spatial application of the various direct management measures can be found in section 6.2.

6.1.1 Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of previously employed policies and practices and adjusting to changes that occur over time. Adaptive management is a foundation on which the Plan is based. To enable adaptive management, active monitoring of performance indicators (see Section 7) would begin upon implementation of the plan. Triggers would be set for each indicator during implementation planning and would be used to signal when new management measures may be needed or when current management measures can be adjusted.

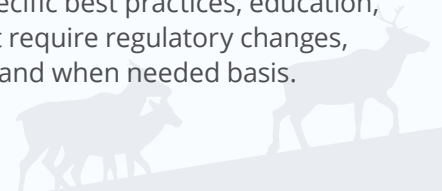
To enable adaptive management, monitoring of performance indicators would occur within all areas of caribou habitat. The plan would be reviewed every 4 years. Results from the monitoring would be used to

inform the success of the plan to date and to determine if regulatory (e.g. full-season closures, partial-season closures, active management areas) updates to the plan are required. However, 6 areas would be subjected to a more intensive monitoring program and an initial 2-year review period given their very high importance to caribou and their very high value and volume of winter motorized recreation. These areas include:

- Core lodge,
- Bullmoose,
- Powder King,
- Hasler,
- Silversands, and
- Wolverine.

In these areas, monitoring results would be reviewed after 2 years, rather than the regular 4 year adaptive management cycle. If monitoring shows that conditions are challenging the shared recovery objective, or if exceptional / unexpected circumstances arise during the monitoring period, the Government of British Columbia would work with the winter motorized recreation organizations and the Parties to identify an appropriate management response which could include, but may not be limited to, voluntary solutions and/or regulatory changes. Any regulatory changes would include Indigenous consultation and public and stakeholder engagement before being implemented. Also within these areas, greater emphasis would be placed on promoting and educating riders about operational best practices, efforts would be taken to establish stewardship management agreements between the Government of British Columbia and the local winter motorized recreation organizations and frequent patrols by the Conservation Officer Service and Guardians would occur to promote operational practices.

Adjustments to indirect management measures (e.g. amount, type, and location of monitoring, recommendations for specific best practices, education, promotion), which do not require regulatory changes, would be made on an as and when needed basis.



6.1.2 Full-season Closure Areas

Full-season Closure Areas, administered through the *Wildlife Act's Motor Vehicle Access Prohibition Regulation* or the *BC Parks Act Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation*, would be implemented in areas deemed most sensitive to caribou recovery. These closures are applied where there is high potential for caribou to be displaced or disturbed by winter motorized recreation and / or predators to be introduced into current use habitat throughout the entire winter period. Closures are also being applied in core and current use caribou habitat that are outside of identified riding areas.

Full closure areas prohibit winter motorized recreation for the entire winter season (November 1 – May 14) annually. Regulatory signage would be installed and maintained at all historic staging areas and access points into the closure areas.

Refer to section 6.2 to see where the Full-season Closure Areas would be applied.

6.1.3 Partial-season Closure Areas

Partial-season Closure Areas, administered through the *Wildlife Act's Motor Vehicle Access Prohibition Regulation* or the *BC Parks Act Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation*, would be implemented where the best available data and Indigenous knowledge allow land managers to be confident that caribou are not present during specific periods of the winter. In these areas, winter motorized recreation is prohibited between January 15 and May 14 annually and permitted outside of these times. Partial-season Closure Areas would provide caribou the protection they need when they occupy habitat within the specific riding area(s) and ensure riding opportunity exists when the best available data show that caribou do not typically occupy habitat within the riding area. Regulatory signage would be installed and maintained at all historic staging areas and access points into the closure areas.

Refer to section 6.2 to see where the Partial-season Closure Areas would be applied.



6.1.4 Active Management Areas

Active management areas are applied in core and current use habitat that also contain high value and / or unique winter motorized recreation opportunities. Administered through the *Wildlife Act's Motor Vehicle Access Prohibition Regulation* or the *BC Parks Act Park, Conservancy and Recreation Area Regulation* active management areas allow access to be opened or closed on a daily basis based on established conditions, or triggers, as set out in stewardship management agreement.

Within active management areas, winter motorized recreation is prohibited during the winter period (November 1 – May 14). However, subject to specific conditions which would need to be met, winter motorized recreation may be permitted in these areas through an exemption permit that would be issued to one or more of the winter motorized recreation organizations who have an established stewardship management agreement. To be subject to exemption permit, riders within an “open” active management area would need to be a member of one of the regional winter motorized recreation clubs.

Though conditions would be established during implementation of the plan and execution of a stewardship management agreement(s), example conditions could include:

- There are no GPS-collared caribou telemetry points, buffered by 500m, overlapping the active management area boundary,
- There are no caribou observed within the active management area by local snowmobilers, Government staff or First Nations' Guardians, and
- Government staff or First Nations' Guardians have not observed predators directly in, or through camera traps, within the active management area boundary or evidence that wolves are accessing high elevation habitat.

Once opened, access within active management areas would be closed when one or more of the established conditions are not met (e.g. caribou enters the active management boundary, wolves are observed within the boundary etc.). Exemption permit conditions would be reviewed annually in collaboration with the organization and the parties of the Agreement and informed by information collected by intensive monitoring of caribou, compliance, and predator use of the area.

An online mobile app, social media and communications with winter motorized recreation organizations would be used to communicate the status of the active management area as has been implemented elsewhere in the province. Riders would be required to check one of the communication channels to confirm whether the active management area is open or closed before their outing. Where cell phone service is not available at staging areas into active management areas, signage would be installed at the start of major road access routes reminding visitors to check the mobile app or website to determine the status of the active management area. Signage would also be installed at staging areas to remind visitors to check the status of the riding area before entering.

Refer to section 6.2 to see where the Active Management Areas would be applied.



6.1.5 Riding Enhancement Areas

Riding enhancement areas recognise the value of winter motorized recreation to many residents and visitors to the region, help off-set the impact of full and partial season closures, provide opportunities for winter motorized recreation, and if local governments and tourism organizations are interested, could help to support winter tourism development. Several potential enhancement areas have been identified by the SPSAC or the Parties for further review. Ideally, enhancement areas are areas that:

- Provide exceptional winter motorized recreation terrain,
- Support a diversity of winter motorized opportunities at a variety of skill levels,
- Be relatively easy to access, and
- Pose low, or acceptable, risk to caribou and long-term caribou recovery and other sensitive species.

The Parties of the Partnership Agreement are willing to support and stimulate investments in enhance the quality, access, safety, and visitor experiences within enhancement areas. Though further site scale enhancement planning would be led by the Province in partnership with local / regional governments and stakeholders, potential enhancements that have been proposed by the SPSAC include:

- Development of new or enhancement of existing access trails,
- Expansion or development of parking / staging areas,
- Prioritization of parking area snow removal in areas of lower risk to caribou,
- Development or enhancement of visitor comfort and convenience amenities (e.g. washrooms, warming huts).
- Upgrade or re-routing of existing access trails to improve functionality for grooming, support safer all-weather access and connect to key destinations and/or communities,
- Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale assessments, ratings, and mapping,
- Grooming, and
- Site gateway, wayfinding, educational, safety and regulatory signage.

The public and stakeholder engagement process would help refine recommendations for these areas to inform feasibility assessment and implementation led by the Government of British Columbia, in partnership with local organizations.

Refer to section 6.2 to see where the Enhancement Areas are being considered.

6.1.6 Education & Communications

Building on past education materials and programs including those developed by the BC Snowmobile Federation, the Parties would design and implement a comprehensive rider education and ethics program. The program would work to educate residents and visitors about the rules for riding in the region, location of open/closed/active management areas, the status of caribou, recovery efforts, the impacts of winter motorized recreation on caribou and ways to minimize the impacts of caribou. The program would be deliberately designed to reach riders with appropriate messaging at all stages of the “Path to Purchase” (Figure 9).

The program may include:

- Dedicated webpage to support trip planning,
- Updating operational practices guide,
- Visitor Mobile App with online and offline capabilities to help riders remain compliant with closures, communicate active management area status, promote responsible riding practices, and report caribou and predator sightings,
- Communication strategies through regional and local Destination Management Organizations to proactively promote and deliberately shift / disperse visitation to riding areas that have lower potential impact on caribou,
- Engagement of key winter motorized recreation influencers (e.g. professional snowmobilers, respected club members, leaders of gear and equipment manufacturers etc.) to help to normalize responsible riding practices as well as support for caribou recovery and the implementation of the Plan.



Figure 9 Path to Purchase (Destination Canada)

6.1.7 Access & Snow Removal

Working with the winter motorized recreation organizations during implementation, the BC Government would work with partners to review all winter motorized recreation access points and develop a hierarchy for snow removal. The hierarchy would prioritize snow removal in parking areas that provide access to enhancement areas, open areas and active management areas that pose low risk to caribou. Snow removal would not occur at parking areas that provide access to full-season closure areas or during partial season-closure periods.

6.1.8 Compliance Assurance and Enforcement

Compliance assurance, including enforcement, is a necessary management tool that is essential to backstopping the implementation of the Plan. Supporting the implementation of this plan would be a priority for the Conservation Officer Service (CO's), Parks Officers and when and where feasible, First Nation Guardians. Enforcement and compliance staff would undertake regular on-trail and aviation-based patrols during the winter periods to monitor and respond to non-compliance including greater presence during peak periods. Compliance monitoring may also include self-policing / reporting, trail counters and cameras. As appropriate, enforcement actions would be taken including verbal and written warnings, violation tickets, and in extreme cases, court summons. Compliance and enforcement staff would also directly interact with visitors to provide education and promote responsible riding behaviours.



6.2 SPATIAL APPLICATION OF MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The following section identifies, by herd, where the management measures identified in section 6.1 would be applied.

6.2.1 Klinse-za (previously, Scott & Moberly)

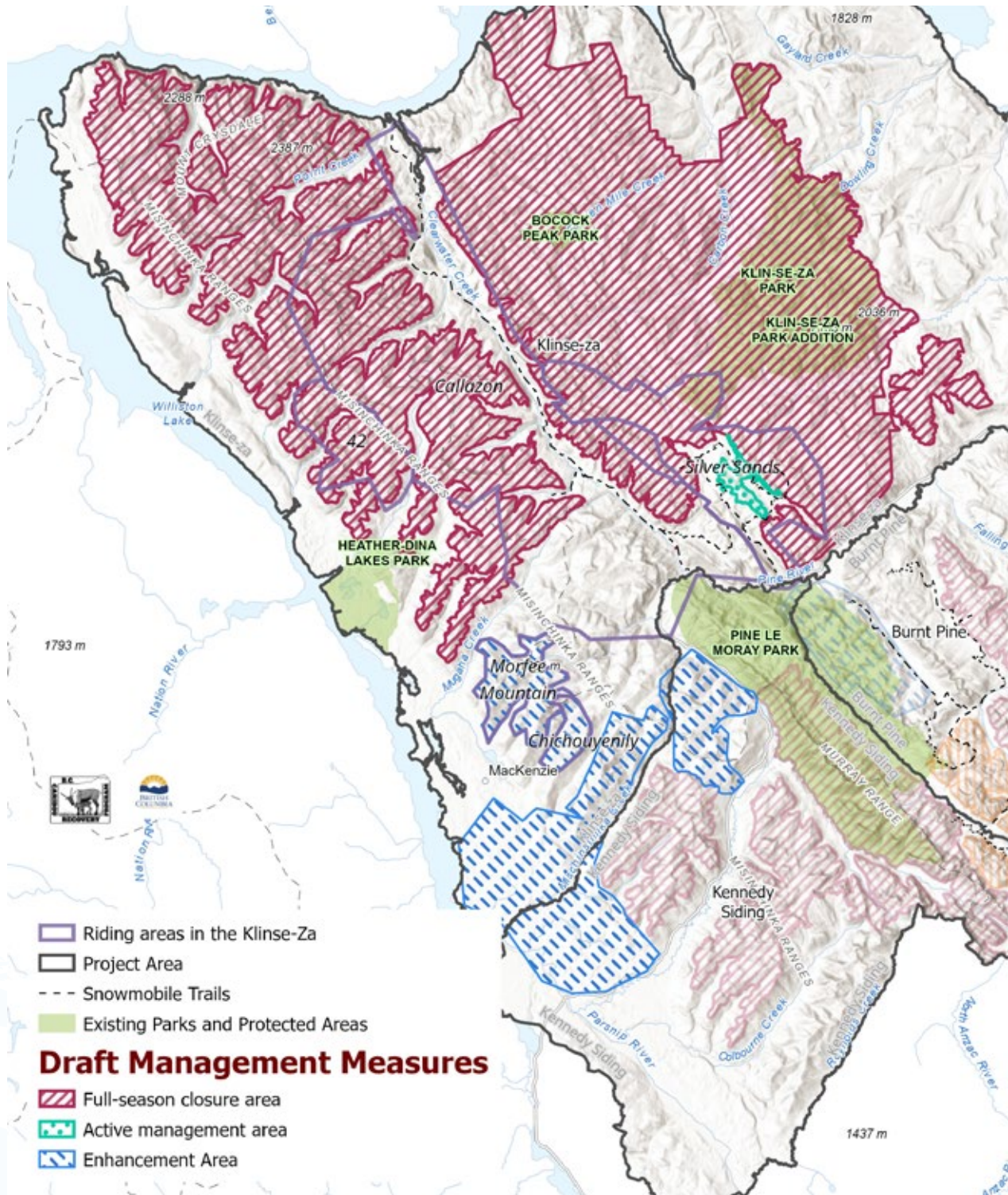


Figure 10 Klinse-za (previously, Scott & Moberly) Management Measures

6.2.2 Kennedy Siding & Burnt Pine

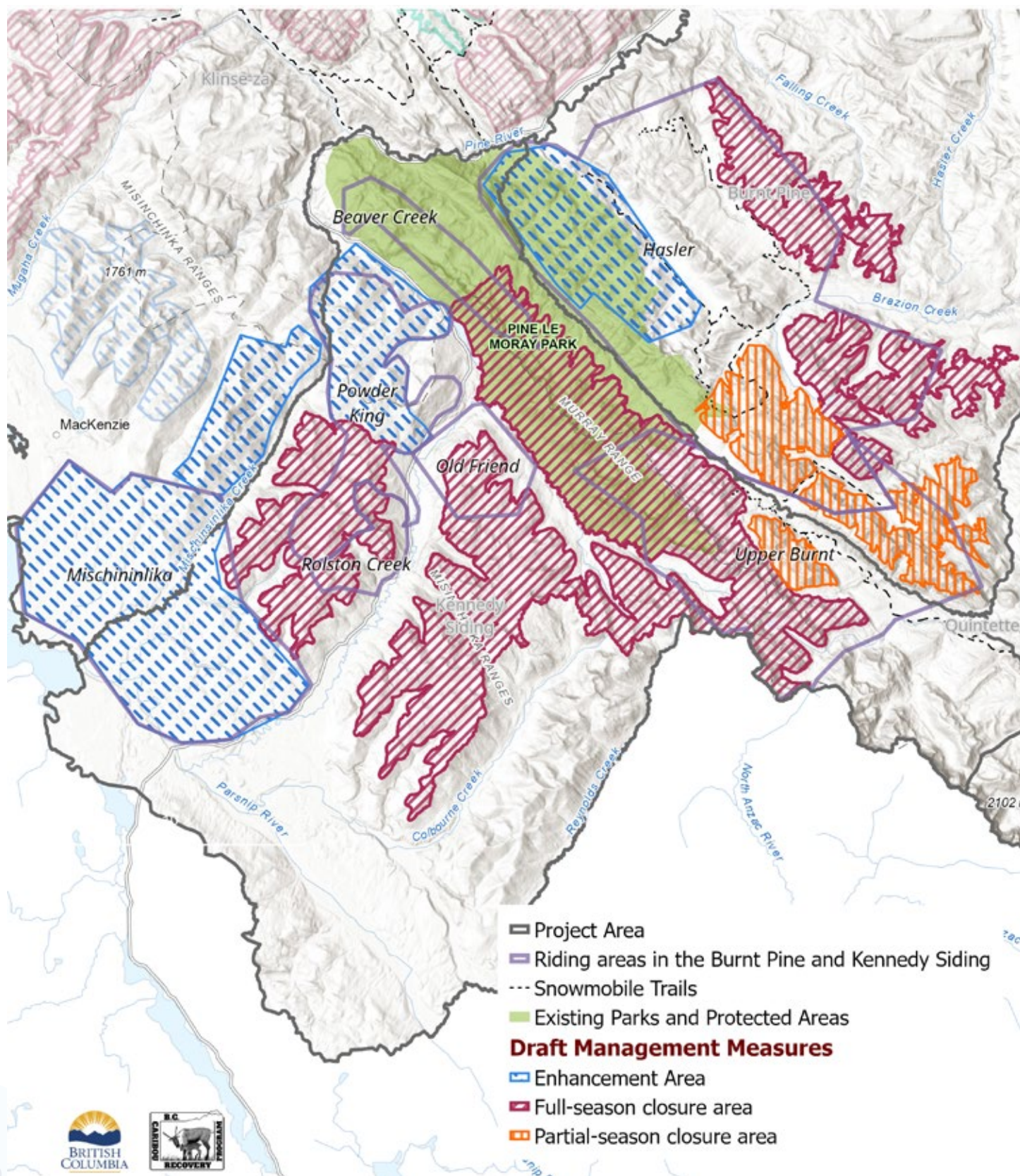


Figure 11 Kennedy Siding & Burnt Pine Management Measures

6.2.3 Quintette

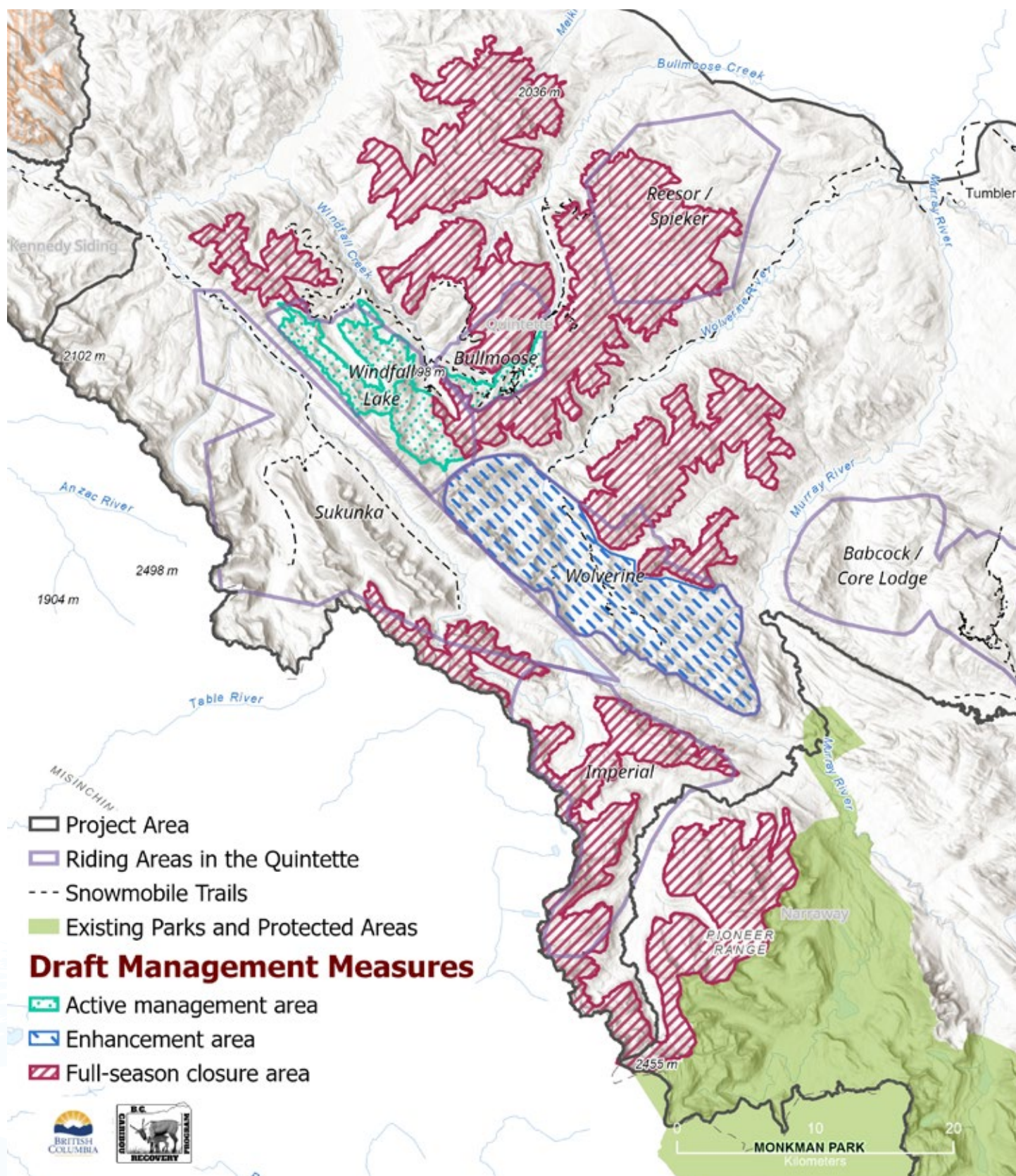


Figure 12 Quintette Management Measures

6.2.4 Narraway

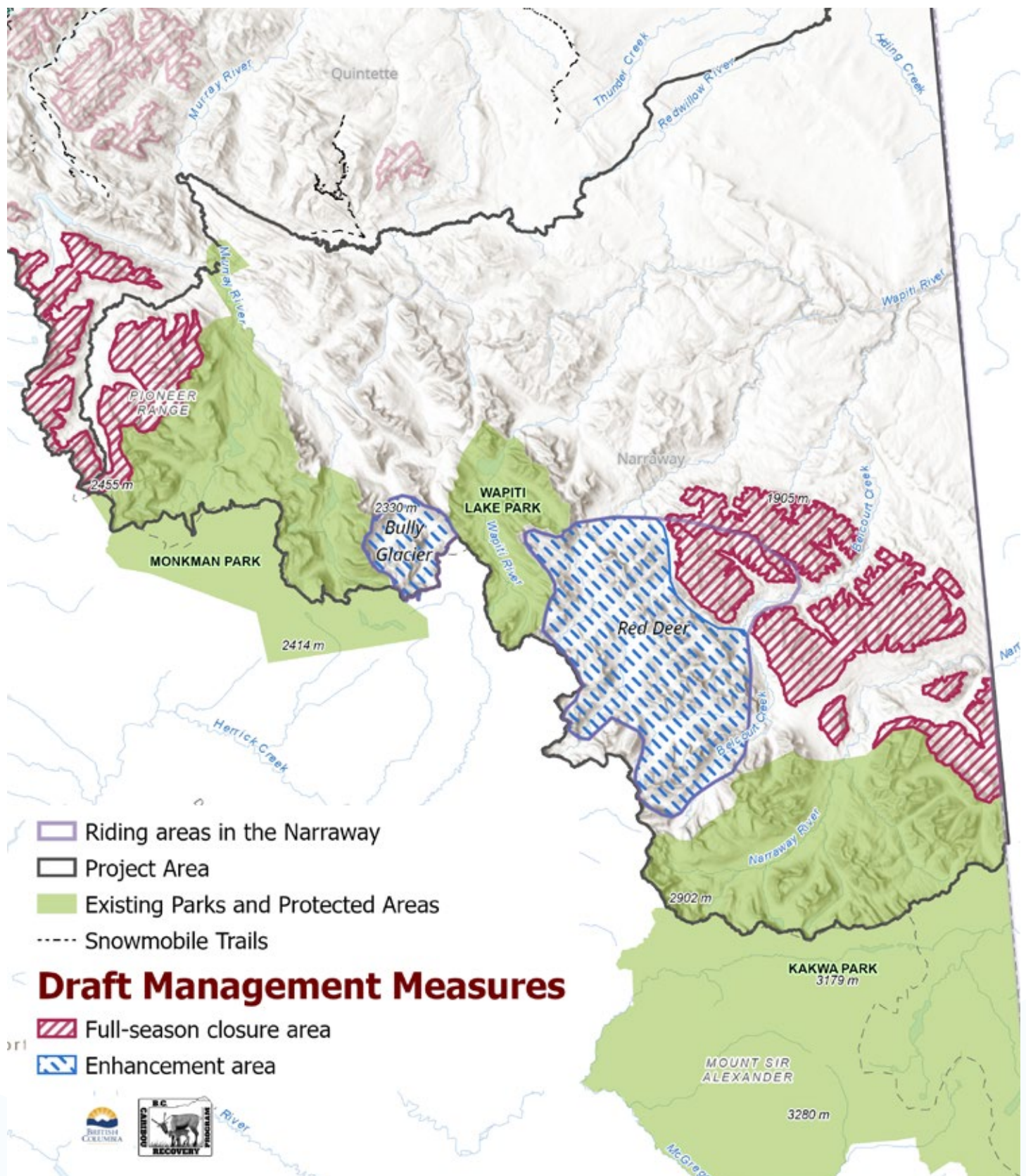


Figure 13 Narraway Management Measures

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MONITORING & PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Sound management decisions need to be based on the collection and monitoring of good data – this is critical to supporting the adaptive management approach that is the foundation of this plan. Monitoring is the process of routinely and systematically gathering information or making observations to assess the status of resource conditions. Monitoring requires the selection of indicators and establishment of triggers or thresholds, the systematic collection and observation of data regarding each indicator and the evaluation of the data in relation to the triggers and thresholds. Monitoring would allow the Government of British Columbia and the Parties to transparently and objectively confirm whether the desired resource conditions regarding caribou recovery and winter motorized recreation are being achieved under the current management measures or whether changes are required. Though specific monitoring details would be determined during implementation, the following desired resource conditions and indicators would guide BC Government's monitoring.

INDICATOR

Specific, measurable variables that indicate the status of a desired condition.

THRESHOLD

The minimum acceptable condition for change in indicators.

TRIGGER

A condition of concern for an indicator that is enough to prompt a management response in order to ensure a threshold is not crossed.

DESIRED RESOURCE CONDITIONS:

- Caribou populations continue to increase.
- Caribou occupancy of core habitat expands as caribou populations increase.
- Caribou are not displaced from current, or preferred, habitats by winter motorized recreation.
- Quality and diverse winter motorized recreation opportunities are available and support local economic development.
- There is no evidence that winter motorized recreation caused or contributed to any known caribou predation events.
- The majority of winter motorized recreation occurs in areas of lower risk to caribou.
- Winter motorized recreation visitors are compliant with full season, partial season, and active management closures.

INDICATORS:

Caribou:

- Caribou population by herd
- Calf recruitment
- Caribou presence / re-occupancy of areas closed to winter motorized recreation (KDE 95% expands)
- Evidence of caribou displacement as a result of winter motorized recreation. Distribution of currently used habitat (KDE 95% by winter period)

Predation:

- Number of documented incidents of caribou predation along a winter motorized recreation route or where the route was used to access caribou.

Visitation:

- Percent of total winter motorized recreation visitation that occurs in areas of low to no risk to caribou recovery.
- Growth in winter motorized recreation visitor economy in enhanced / developed areas
- Visitation / volume of winter motorized recreation in enhanced / open riding areas
- Winter motorized recreation club membership

Compliance:

- Number of non-compliance incidents / patrol days.
- Number of enforcement actions – total and per patrol day

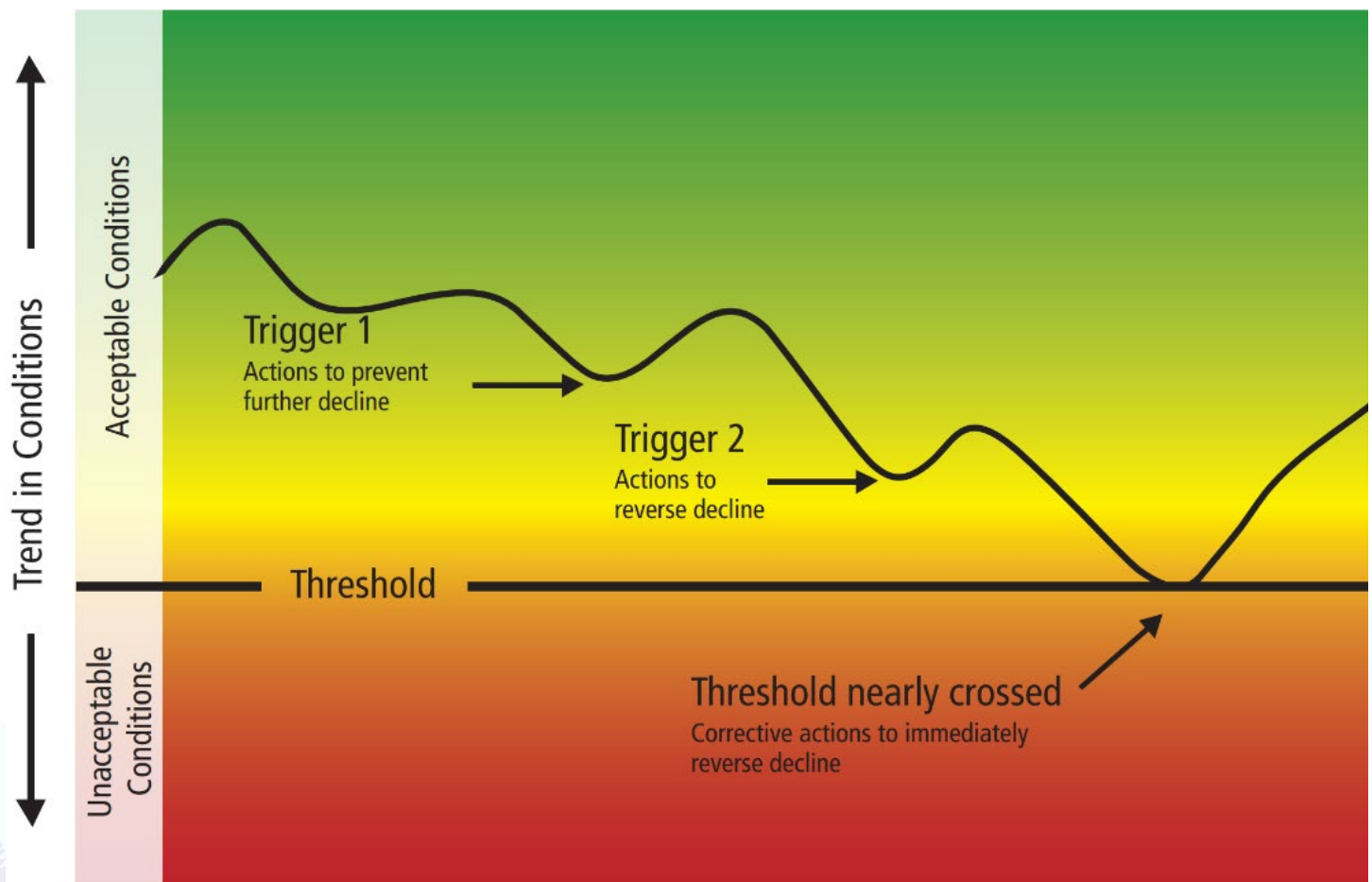


Figure 14 Monitoring & Adaptive Management Approach

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – EXISTING EDUCATION RESOURCES

- BC Snowmobile Federation - Snowmobilers Guide to Environmental Stewardship <https://bcsf.s3.amazonaws.com/environmental-stewardship-manual.pdf>
- [Caribou and Snowmobiling | Snowmobile Selkirks](#)
- [Snowmobile Reference Materials.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)



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May 14, 2021 Draft - For Engagement Purposes

