

WINTER MOTORIZED RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN IN THE SOUTH PEACE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

June 16, 2021

1. How does winter motorized recreation affect caribou and caribou recovery?

- Though not the primary or sole threat to caribou recovery, the impacts on caribou from winter motorized recreation act cumulatively with other primary threats such as habitat loss and increases in predator populations. Female caribou are pregnant over the winter months when food is hard to find and travel is difficult. Motorized recreation can further stress the well-being of caribou in the winter, which is particularly concerning when herds are small, remnant and in a state of long-term decline like the Central Group. The best available science suggests that winter motorized recreation in alpine and subalpine caribou habitat can:
 - » **Displace caribou** – Winter motorized recreation can result in caribou leaving or avoiding more optimal habitat and moving to or staying in less optimal habitat. This can lead to increased predation and / or greater energy expenditures during a time of year that is already more challenging for caribou due to food being harder to find and moving through snow taking more energy. This can then result in lower survival and reproductive rates.
 - » **Disturb caribou** – The noise from winter motorized recreation, and human presence, can disturb caribou which results in greater energy expenditure and / or increased stress hormones even if they do not leave the habitat they are in. This can lead to lower survival and reproductive rates.
 - » **Increased predation** - Winter motorized recreation packs down the snow, especially on access trails. The firmer surface allows predators to move through the landscape more efficiently, which can provide access to caribou range and increase predation.
- 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.
- When herds are small, even infrequent predation events can have a serious impact on the caribou population, counteracting the benefits of other expensive recovery measures such as maternity penning.
- More information on caribou and snowmobiles can be found here: [Recreation and Caribou Literature](#).



June 16, 2021

2. Why is the Government of BC preparing a Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace Region?

- The Province of BC is proposing a Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan to compliment the significant investment in other recovery measures for these herds.
- In addition, in February 2020, the Government's of British Columbia, Canada, West Moberly First Nations and Saulneau First Nations (the Parties) signed the [Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group to the Southern Mountain Caribou](#) (the Agreement). The 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. The government of British Columbia is the accountable Party for the development, engagement, consultation, and implementation of a management plan for motorized recreation to achieve the Shared Recovery Objective for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou.

3. What is the planning boundary for the Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace Region?

- The draft Plan is focused on public lands within the herd boundaries of the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou in BC. This includes the Klinse-za, Kennedy Siding, Burnt Pine, Quintette, and Narraway herds as shown in the map below. The planning area includes lands near Mackenzie, Chetwynd, and Tumbler Ridge.

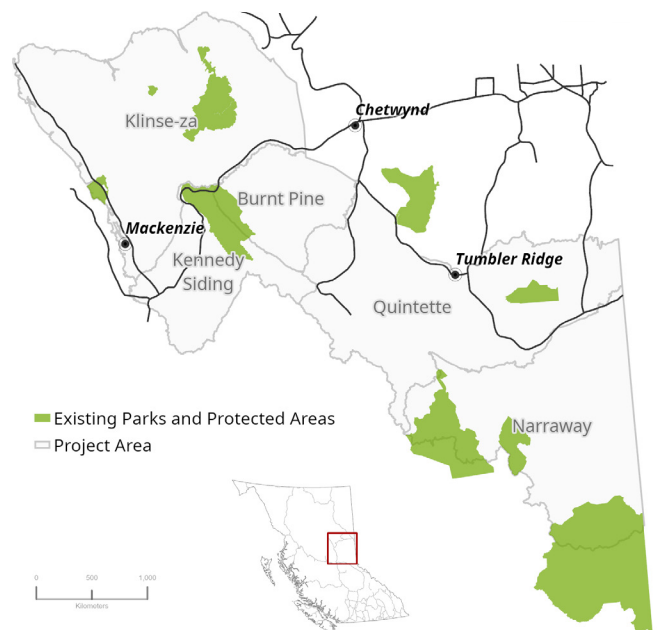


Figure 1 Study Area

4. What is the purpose of the Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace Region?

- The draft Plan identifies the management measures and strategies that are proposed to be implemented to mitigate the impacts of winter motorized recreation on caribou and caribou recovery. The Plan identifies areas proposed for full-season closures, partial-season closures, and active management areas that would help to avoid or minimize impacts to caribou from winter motorized recreation. The Plan also identifies areas that are proposed to remain open to winter motorized recreation, education strategies, compliance and enforcement and areas where recreation enhancement would be focused. Further engagement on these enhancement areas will inform the feasibility and implementation that will be led by the province of BC in partnership with local organizations.



5. How was the draft Plan prepared?

- To initiate the planning process, the Government of British Columbia established the South Peace Snowmobile Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee, comprised of local winter motorized recreation stakeholders and local governments, was tasked with providing advice to the Government of British Columbia on how winter motorized recreation could be managed in the region to support caribou recovery. Following the [South Peace Snowmobile Advisory Committee](#) report, British Columbia worked collaboratively with representatives from the Governments of Canada, West Moberly First Nations and Saulteau First Nations (the Parties to the Partnership Agreement) to review the best available science regarding caribou and caribou habitat, current and future habitat needs, winter motorized recreation values, and the advice from the Advisory Committee. The Parties worked collaboratively to develop the draft plan.
- The Parties accepted many of the SPSAC's recommendations. Other recommendations were not accepted, and therefore not included in the draft plan, due to their potential impacts on achieving the shared recovery objective. The proposed draft plan has not been endorsed by the SPSAC to date.

6. What is the status of the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou?

- Southern Mountain Caribou, including the herds within the Central Group, have experienced significant population declines over the past three generations. 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 Kennedy Siding caribou sometimes use that range. 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 (e.g., predation, disturbance, avalanches). For more information on the status of the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou, please review the following webpage: [Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou in BC](#).

7. Does the Plan impact non-motorized winter recreation in the planning area?

- No. The Plan is focused on winter motorized recreation only. The Plan does not propose any non-motorized winter recreation management measures.

8. Does the Plan impact summer motorized and non-motorized recreation in the planning area?

- No. The management plan is focused on winter motorized recreation only. The Plan does not identify new management measures that would impact summer motorized or non-motorized recreation. However, it should be noted that existing summer motor vehicle closures in the region remain in place.



9. Does the Plan impact industrial or commercial use of motorized vehicles in the planning area?

- Consistent with similar measures in BC, in places where prohibitions on motorized vehicle use are proposed, the regulations may allow for exemptions for specific industrial or commercial uses of motorized vehicles, in specific areas. These potential exemptions will be discussed with relevant tenure holders during the engagement period.

10. How does the Plan impact winter motorized recreation in the planning area?

- Based upon the information the Government of British Columbia received from the South Peace Snowmobile Advisory Committee, there are a total of 21 identified snowmobiling areas throughout the planning area. These are the most popular areas, but snowmobiling currently occurs throughout the planning area.
 - Within the identified riding areas, the Plan proposes:
 - Indirect management actions including education, monitoring and adaptive management for all 21 riding areas.
 - Continued snowmobiling opportunity throughout 70% of the identified snowmobiling area¹.
 - Closure of 30% of the identified snowmobiling area to winter motorized recreation.
 - Although 70% of the identified snowmobile area remains available for snowmobile use, early engagement on the draft Plan has identified that proposed management actions impact historic access to some of these open areas.

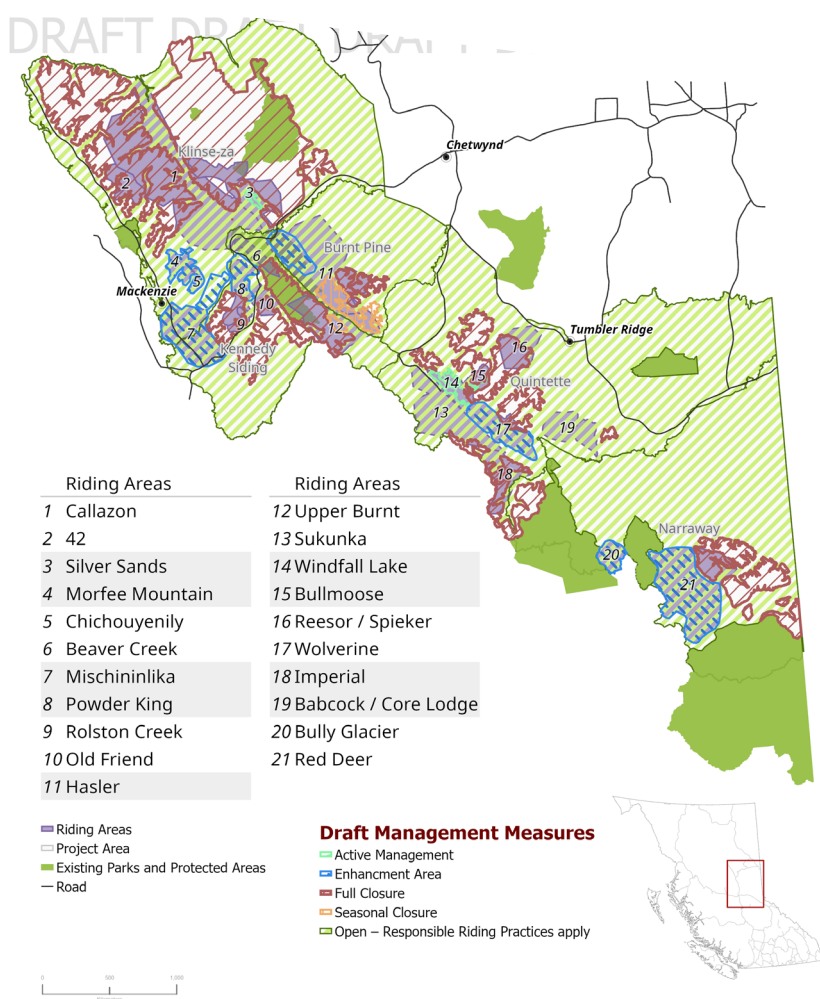
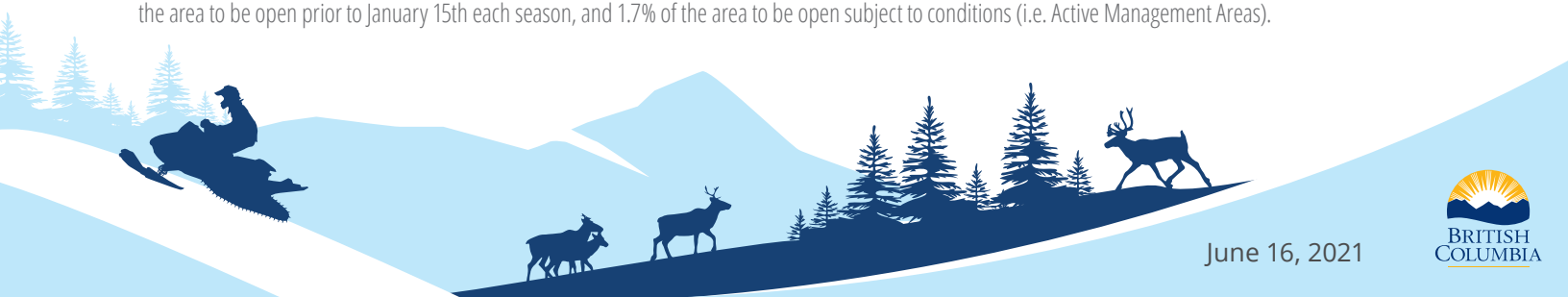


Figure 2 Overview Management Measures

- For details on the specific application of management actions, please refer to the draft *Winter Motorized Recreation Management Plan in the South Peace*.

¹ The proposed measures in the Plan would result in 66% of known snowmobile area (hectares) to remain open all winter with indirect management actions, 2.5% of the area to be open prior to January 15th each season, and 1.7% of the area to be open subject to conditions (i.e. Active Management Areas).



11. How can I provide my input on the draft Winter Motorized Management Plan in the South Peace?

- Sharing your input is easy. Please visit engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou/ for more information about the project, to review the draft plan, and to share your input through our online survey. You can also submit a written response via email or letter to caribou.recovery@gov.bc.ca or by mailing your input to the following address before the engagement period closes (July 14, 2021 at 4:00pm PST):

*Caribou Recovery Program
PO Box 9546 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9C5*

- Hard copies of the plan, maps and feedback survey are available to be picked up and taken home at the following Government of BC offices:

*FrontCounter BC Fort St. John
100-10003 110 Avenue
Fort St. John, BC
V1J 6M7*

*FrontCounter BC Dawson Creek
9000 17th Street
Dawson Creek, BC
V1G 1A5*

*FrontCounter BC Mackenzie
1 Cicada Road
Mackenzie, BC
V0J 2C0*

12. How will the input received during the engagement process be used?

- Once the engagement period closes, all input received will be assembled, analyzed and summarized into a What We Heard Report by an external contractor. The What We Heard Report will be used by the Government of BC and the Parties to inform final recommendations as part of a decision package that will be submitted to the respective statutory decision maker. The What We Heard Report will also accompany the decision package that will be submitted to the respective statutory decision makers.

13. When does the engagement period close?

- All input on the draft management plan must be received by June 30, 2021 at 4:00 pm (PST).



14. What other actions is British Columbia taking to support caribou recovery and achieve the shared recovery objective as set out in the Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group to the Southern Mountain Caribou?

- Work is ongoing by the Central Group SMC Technical Working Group, a government-to-government committee of technical professionals established in accordance with the Partnership Agreement, to identify and develop recommendations for caribou recovery related land use objectives for the resource sector. As set out in the Agreement, further discussions with stakeholders and between the Parties will occur before recommendations are made to provincial government decision makers. Completion of this work has been delayed somewhat due to the complicated nature of the work, and human resource limitations due to COVID-19 related complications.
- The Partnership Agreement also enabled the creation of a Caribou Recovery Committee (CRC) that is responsible for reviewing applications for development within specified zones (A1, B1, B4, and B5). The CRC has representation from each Party to the Agreement, has met monthly since May 2020, and provides consensus-based recommendations to provincial decision-makers on whether the application contributes to the achievement of the Shared Recovery Objective and meets the criteria as laid out in Schedule 1 of the Agreement.
- In June 2019, the Government of BC put in place interim protection for over 700,000 hectares of caribou habitat.
- The Province continues to support other measures committed to in the Agreement such as the caribou maternal pen and predator management.

