

**TFL 23**

**Caribou Assessment Report**

**CIRCLE CITY**

**Block(s):** 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**Submitted to:**

Cam Leitch, RPF  
Pope & Talbot  
Nakusp Division  
Nakusp, BC

**Prepared by:**

Doug Seaton  
Cape Horn Consulting Inc.  
Nakusp, BC  
&  
Dennis Hamilton, RPBio.  
Nanuq Consulting Ltd  
Nelson, BC

March 13, 2002

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Planning Unit***

CP 568

AREA: Circle City

MAP: see Figure 1

### ***Description***

The five proposed cutblocks are located at the upper end of Ferguson creek around the confluence of Parisian, Coon, Galena, and Surprise Creeks. Blocks 1 – 4 are in the ICHwk1, and transitional to the ESSFwc1 –wc4 biogeoclimatic variants along their top boundary's. Block 5 is in the ESSF wc1 – wc4.

PEM-based seasonal caribou habitat suitability mapping rates cutblocks 1,2 and 3 as high for summer/fall (S), early winter (WE) and spring (P) and moderate for late winter (LW). Block 4 is rated moderate for all seasons, and block 5 is rated as moderate for spring and summer/fall and high for late winter. (Hamilton and Wilson 2002).

Caribou telemetry point locations identified late winter caribou use in the top basin of Surprise Creek to the south east of block 2 as well as the high pass between Parisian Creek and Pool Creek to the west of block 5. Summer/fall and spring locations indicate use of the ridge above block 1, as well as the upper riparian areas of Surprise and Galena creeks. and in block 2. Block 5 has a spring telemetry point along the creek on the south border.

Caribou management strategy for TFL23 (LUP Working Group 2002) identifies this proposed development area as a caribou special management zone (zone 2).

## **RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

### ***Reconnaissance-level Survey***

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a field reconnaissance-level survey of the ridgeline between Parisian Creek and Coon Creek, above and to the north of block 5 on September 4, 2002. Access was by helicopter.

No evidence of caribou use was found along the steep ridgeline above block 5. An old mining trail leads through the rocks above and down the ridge towards block 5.

Field comments are summarized in Appendix I, a satellite image field map is illustrated in Appendix II, and PEM-based habitat mapping results are illustrated in Appendix IV. Arboreal lichen abundance was estimated according to Armleder et al (1992).

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a field reconnaissance-level survey of the ridgeline between Coon creek and Galena creek above and to the north east of block 4 on September 4, 2002. Access was by helicopter.

A well defined old mining trail leads down the ridgeline and into block 4 Caribou sign (scat, tracks scrapes) is abundant along this trail. Both recent and old sign was observed along this trail and through the surrounding timber. The caribou sign tends to leave the mining trail on the southern switchbacks, heading south along the northwest boundary of proposed block 4. A well-defined game trail follows the north side of Galena creek down towards its confluence with Ferguson creek along the southwest boundary of block 4.

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a field reconnaissance-level survey of the ridgeline between Galena creek and Surprise creek above and to the north of block 2 on September 24, 2002. Access was by helicopter.

A well defined old mining trail leads down the ridgeline and into block 3 Caribou sign (scat, tracks scrapes) is abundant along this trail.

The steep rocky ridge (90%) above to the northeast of block 2 has no evidence of caribou use. Deer sign is abundant along the top northeast boundary of block 2. A small amount of caribou sign is found along the north side of Surprise creek along the west boundary.

No additional reconnaissance-level surveys have been completed in this planning unit.

### ***Stand-level Surveys***

#### **Block 1**

A stand level survey of block 1 has not been completed.

##### **Evidence of Use:**

An old mining trail runs between Ferguson creek and the west boundary of block 1. Caribou sign is found along this trail. (D. Seaton, *pers. obs.*).

##### **Habitat Evaluation:**

PEM-based caribou habitat suitability mapping rates this area as high for the spring, summer/fall and early winter, and moderate for late winter. (Hamilton and Wilson 2002)

##### **Other Species:**

Deer sign was observed along the mining trail to the west of block 1.

#### **Block 2**

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a stand level survey of block 2 on September 24, 2002. Access was by helicopter and foot.

##### **Evidence of Use:**

Caribou pellets, tracks and evidence of feeding were observed through the lower portion of block 2 along the north side of Surprise Creek. No evidence of caribou use was found in the top northeast portion of block 2.

##### **Habitat Evaluation:**

PEM-based caribou habitat suitability mapping rates this area as high for summer/fall, early winter and spring, and moderate for late winter. Field observations are consistent with PEM based ratings.

This mature mixed forest supports abundant lichen, rated class 3, (80% *Bryoria spp.*). The lower portion of block 2 has widely spaced tall spruce trees with good sightability (security) and an abundance of herbaceous vegetation.

**Other Species:**

Deer tracks are abundant below the rocks along the upper northeast portion of block 2.

**Block 3**

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a stand level survey of block 3 on September 4, 2002. Access was by helicopter and foot.

**Evidence of Use:**

Caribou scat and tracks are dispersed throughout block 3. No apparent trails were observed in the area surveyed. The old mining trail is difficult to follow.

**Habitat Evaluation:**

PEM-based caribou habitat suitability mapping rates this area as high for summer/fall, early winter and spring, and moderate for late winter. Field observations are consistent with PEM based ratings. This good early winter habitat is well linked with good late winter habitat on the ridges above.

**Other Species:**

A small amount of deer sign is evident throughout the area surveyed in block 3.

**Block 4**

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a stand level survey of block 4 on September 4, 2002. Access was by helicopter and foot.

**Evidence of Use:**

Caribou pellets, tracks and evidence of feeding were observed throughout block 4. A distinct trail runs along the east boundary of the proposed block, and a well-defined trail follows the ridgeline above Galena Creek along the southeast boundary of block 4. Sign of frequent caribou use (pellets, tracks) is found along this trail.

**Habitat Evaluation:**

PEM-based caribou habitat suitability mapping rates this area as moderate for all seasons. Field-based habitat ratings are high for spring and summer/fall, moderate for early winter and low for late winter. This area is well linked with high value late winter habitats above to the northwest. The ICH – ESSF transition above block 4 is currently heavily used by caribou.

**Other Species:**

A small amount of deer tracks were found throughout block 4.

**Block 5**

Doug Seaton and Len Stratton conducted a stand level survey of block 5 on September 4, 2002. Access was by helicopter and foot.

**Evidence of Use:**

No evidence of caribou use was observed along the old mining trail leading down through block 5, or through the portion of the block surveyed.

**Habitat Evaluation:**

PEM-based caribou habitat suitability mapping rates this area as moderate for all seasons, with some higher late winter values. Field observations of lichen in block 5 were low, (Class 1; 80% *Bryoria spp.*). Field caribou habitat ratings are low for early winter and late winter, and moderate for spring and summer fall.

**Other Species:**

Deer and bear scat was found through block 5.

## ***Recommendations***

**Block 1**

Leave a minimum of 150 meters between the western block boundary and Ferguson creek to serve as an undisturbed travel corridor.

Further investigation is required to determine if there are any established caribou use patterns in block 1.

**Block 2**

Leave a minimum of 120 meters between the western block boundary and Surprise creek to serve as an undisturbed travel corridor linking seasonal habitats.

Retain an RBA of 20 – 24 square meters per hectare in approximate uniform distribution throughout the block. Focus on lichen bearing tree retention.

**Block 3**

Leave a minimum of 120 meters between the southern block boundary and Surprise creek to serve as an undisturbed travel corridor.

Retain an RBA of 20 – 24 square meters per hectare in approximate uniform distribution throughout the block. Focus on lichen bearing tree retention.

**Block 4**

Leave a minimum of 150 meters between the southwestern block boundary and Ferguson creek to serve as an undisturbed travel corridor.

Leave a minimum of 150 meters between the southeastern block boundary and Galena creek to serve as an undisturbed travel corridor.

Retain an RBA of 20 – 24 square meters per hectare in approximate uniform distribution throughout the block. Focus on lichen bearing tree retention.

### **Block 5**

Leave a minimum of 150 meters between the southern block boundary and Parisian creek to serve as a travel corridor.

Retain groups of trees within the block to facilitate lichen inoculation. Groups should be spaced at about 100 meters and have 10-20+ trees in each group.

### **References Cited**

Armleder, H.M., S. Stevenson, and S.D. Walker. 1992. Estimating the Abundance of Arboreal Forage Lichens. Land Management Handbook Field Guide Insert 7. Ministry of Forests, Research Program, Victoria, BC.

Hamilton, D., and S.F. Wilson. 2002. Central Selkirk Mountain Caribou Habitat Use and Species-habitat Model for TFL23. Prepared for Pope & Talbot, Nakusp, BC.

LUP (Landscape Unit Planning) Working Group. 2002. Caribou Management in TFL#23: Agreement for District-Level Implementation Issues. Prepared for Arrow Forest District, Castlegar, BC.

### **List of Contacts**

Seaton, Doug. Wildlife Consultant, Nakusp, BC.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix I: Field Comments

Appendix II: Map

Appendix III: PEM Based Caribou Habitat Ratings

**Appendix I: Field Comments**

| <b><u>COMMENTS</u></b><br><b>Supplemental Field Form</b><br><b>for</b><br><b>TFL#23 Caribou Assessment</b> |           |           |  |
|--|-----------|-----------|--|
| To be used in conjunction with the <b>WHA</b> field forms and <b>PU</b> field map                          |           |           |  |
|  |           |           |  |
| <b>COMMENTS</b><br>(Reference No. to also be located on Field Map)   |           |           |  |
| Reference No.  | Lat/North | Long/East | COMMENTS   |
| 1  |           |           | Wide timbered riparian area provides a travel corridor up Ferguson creek   |
| 2  |           |           | Old mining trail, well used by caribou.  |
| 3  |           |           | Very steep above lock 2.   |
| 4  |           |           | Deer and bear sign.  |
| 5  |           |           | Travel corridor along Surprise creek.  |
| 6  |           |           | Well-defined caribou trail along the ridge on the north side of Galena creek.  |
| 7  |           |           | Mining trail, not used by caribou.   |
| 8  |           |           | Heavy caribou use in all seasons. Scat, tracks and scrapes are abundant along the trail and throughout the surrounding timber. |
| 9  |           |           |  |
| 10   |           |           |  |
| 11   |           |           |  |
| 12   |           |           |  |

## **Appendix II: Map**



### **Appendix III: PEM Based Caribou Habitat Ratings**