

TFL 23

Caribou Assessment Report

MOUNTAIN GOAT CREEK

Block(s): 3 and 4

Submitted to:

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BACKGROUND

Planning Unit

Cp 570

AREA: Mountain Goat Creek

MAP: see Figure 1

Description

The bottom north boundary of blocks 3 and 4 are in the ICHwk1 biogeoclimatic variant. Both are transitional to ESSFwc1 - wc4 biogeoclimatic variants and have a north aspect.

PEM-based seasonal habitat suitability mapping rates the proposed development area as moderately high for summer/fall (S/F), and moderate for early winter (WE), late winter (LW) and spring (P) (Hamilton and Wilson 2002).



Caribou telemetry point locations identified late winter caribou use on the ridgeline above and to the south of these proposed blocks. Summer/fall locations are in the lower east end of block 4, as well as upstream on the north side of Mountain Goat creek. Spring locations identify use on the south-facing slope across the creek from the proposed blocks.

Caribou management strategy for TFL23 (LUP Working Group 2002) identifies that blocks 3 and 4 are within the mapped caribou special management zone (Zone 2). A caribou connectivity management zone (Zone 1) has been mapped upslope to the south, as well as to the west in the top half of Mountain Goat creek

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Reconnaissance-level Survey

Doug Seaton, Cameron Leitch and Bill Becker conducted a reconnaissance survey of the riparian area upstream of the proposed development area. Access was by helicopter. Fresh caribou sign (tracks, scat, feeding) was abundant at our drop point along the creek, as well as throughout the riparian area upstream of block 4.

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 III. Arboreal lichen abundance was estimated according to Armleder et al (1992).

A trail showing recent sign of caribou use leads uphill from the creek in a northerly direction, about a kilometre upstream from the west boundary of block 4.

Excessive tree thinning for heli – skiing has removed most of the lichen bearing trees and left debris which impedes movement through some of this high use area upstream of the proposed blocks.

Fresh Caribou tracks were observed along Ferguson creek while hiking out.

Bear and deer sign (tracks, trails and scat) is scattered throughout the riparian area upstream of the proposed blocks.

A suspected seasonal migration corridor has been mapped along the ridgeline above and to the south of the development area.

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

Stand-level Surveys

Block 3

Doug Seaton, Cameron Leitch and Bill Becker conducted a stand-level survey along the proposed road through the lower half of block 3 on August 29, 2002. Access was by helicopter and foot.

Evidence of Use:

A lone caribou track was found leading up into block 3 from the old mining trail leading into the block along the proposed road. No other evidence of use was observed in the area surveyed through block 3.

Habitat Evaluation:

PEM-based seasonal habitat suitability mapping rates this block as moderately high for summer/fall, and moderate for early winter, late winter and spring seasons. Field observations of low lichen availability and lack of herbaceous forage indicate block 3 has low suitability for caribou in all seasons. This old mixed forest supports lichen class 2 (80% *Alectoria*). Some blowdown may offer early winter feeding opportunities.

Other Species:

A small amount of deer tracks were observed in block 3.

Block 4

Doug Seaton, Cameron Leitch and Bill Becker conducted a stand-level survey along the proposed road through the lower half of block 4 on August 29, 2002. Access was by helicopter and foot.

Evidence of Use:

Caribou pellets and tracks were observed along a wet seep in the north west corner of block 4 where some herbaceous forage is available. No evidence of use was observed in the remaining area surveyed through block 4.

Habitat Evaluation:

PEM-based seasonal habitat suitability mapping rates this block as moderately high for summer/fall, and moderate for early winter, late winter and spring

seasons. Field observations of low lichen availability and lack of herbaceous forage indicate block 3 has low suitability for caribou in all seasons. This old mixed forest has large wolf hemlock with lichen class 2 (80% *alectoria*)
Trees are wind-firm offering little opportunity for litterfall or feeding on lichen from blowdown.

Other Species:

A small amount of deer tracks were observed in block 4.

Recommendations

Proposed blocks 3 and 4 offer little food for caribou during all seasons.

Further reconnaissance is needed along the ridgeline and top boundary of blocks 3 and 4 to determine the level of caribou use (trails tracks scat) in relation to these two blocks.

Block 3

Retain groups of trees within the block to facilitate lichen inoculation. Groups should be spaced at 50 -150 meters and retained in groups of 10 – 2+.

Block 4

Retain groups of trees within the block to facilitate lichen inoculation. Groups should be spaced at 50 -150 meters and retained in groups of 10 – 2+.

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 Appendices

- Appendix I: Field Comments
Appendix II: Map
Appendix III: PEM Based Caribou Habitat Ratings

Appendix I: Field Comments

<u>COMMENTS</u> Supplemental Field Form for TFL#23 Caribou Assessment			
To be used in conjunction with the WHA field forms and PU field map			
COMMENTS (Reference No. to also be located on Field Map)			
Reference No.	Lat/North	Long/East	COMMENTS
1			Caribou tracks and sign of recent feeding. The mineral seeps along the south bank and wet seeps are heavily used.
2			Caribou and deer tracks and trails throughout the riparian area.
3			Bear trail along the creek. Low lichen loading in the adjacent timber.
4			Glading for heli skiing has an adverse effect on caribou in spring and summer fall as well as early winter. , as it impedes movement and removes future blowdown feeding opportunities
5			Caribou scat. No defined trails or evidence of use. Large wolf hemlock, lichen class 2 (80% <i>alectoria</i>)
6			Old forest, no feed on the forest floor.
7			Fresh deer and caribou tracks along the creek bottom
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Appendix II: Map

Appendix III: PEM Based Caribou Habitat Ratings

