

TFL 23

Caribou Assessment Report

HILL CREEK

Block(s): 14, 25, 27, 28 and 29

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

July 15, 2003

BACKGROUND

Planning Unit

CP 523

AREA: Hill Creek

MAP: see Figure 1

Description

The proposed development area is in the ICHwk1 biogeoclimatic variant.

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

Caribou telemetry point locations identified early winter caribou use above the proposed cutblocks on the ridge to the northeast, and late winter use in the top end of the Hill Creek drainage.

Caribou management strategy for TFL23 (LUP Working Group 2002) identifies a caribou special management zone (zone 2) is mapped along the upper east border of blocks 14, 25, and 27, as well as to the south of block 29. Block 28 does not border the mapped caribou area.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Reconnaissance-level Survey

Doug Seaton and Andrew Alstad conducted a field reconnaissance-level survey of the ridgeline above and to the northeast of the development area. Evidence of seasonal caribou use was observed along this ridgeline. A trail through the pass leading from Hill creek into the Pearson creek drainage to the north has been identified. Field comments are summarized in Appendix I, a satellite image field map is illustrated in Appendix II, caribou habitat assessments were conducted using Wildlife Habitat Assessment field forms (FS882 (5) HRE 98/5; Appendix III), and PEM-based habitat mapping results are illustrated in Appendix IV. Arboreal lichen abundance was estimated according to Armleder et al (1992).

Adult and juvenile caribou tracks were observed along the shoulder of the highway to the west of the proposed cutblocks on July 3, 2003

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

Stand-level Surveys

Block 14

Doug Seaton conducted a stand-level survey of block 14 on July 3, 2003. Access was by foot.

Evidence of Use:

No evidence of use by caribou was observed in the area surveyed in block 14.

Habitat Evaluation:

Site investigations field verified the medium rating for summer/fall and low rating for late winter. However, field ratings were low for early winter and low for spring seasons – in comparison to PEM-based ratings of high for both these seasons.

The mature mixed forest in block 14 supports Class 2 lichen (80% *Alectoria spp.*) and sparse herbaceous undergrowth.

Other Species:

Bear and deer sign is scattered through block 14. An active bear den is located along the top boundary.

Block 25

Doug Seaton conducted a stand level survey of block 25 on July 3, 2003. Access was by foot.

Evidence of Use:

No evidence of use by caribou was observed in the area surveyed in block 25.

Habitat Evaluation:

Field habitat ratings were low for all four seasons, whereas PEM-based habitat ratings are high for early winter and spring and medium for summer/fall. The mature mixed forest in block 25 supports low lichen; Class 1 (80% *Alectoria spp.*), and sparse herbaceous undergrowth.

Evidence of old logging is found through the lower portion of block 25.

Other Species:

Deer tracks were observed within block 25.

Block 27

Doug Seaton conducted a stand level survey of block 27 on July 2, 2003. Access was by foot.

Evidence of Use:

No evidence of use by caribou was observed in the area surveyed in block 27.

Habitat Evaluation:

Field habitat ratings are low for all seasons, whereas PEM-based caribou habitat ratings are high for early winter and spring and medium for summer/fall. The white pine has died off in this block, and the remaining snags support little or no lichen. The remaining tall cedar, fir and hemlock in this stand do not support much lichen (< Class 1; 95% *Alectoria spp.*). There is also very sparse herbaceous undergrowth, providing poor forage for caribou.

Other Species:

Deer, bear and moose sign (i.e., tracks, pellets/scats) was observed in block 27.

Block 28

Doug Seaton conducted a stand level survey of block 28 on July 2, 2003. Access was by foot.

Evidence of Use:

No evidence of use by caribou was observed in the area surveyed in block 28.

Habitat Evaluation:

Field habitat ratings are low for all seasons, whereas PEM-based caribou habitat ratings are high for early winter and spring and medium for summer/fall. The tall cedar, fir and hemlock in this stand do not support much lichen (< Class 1; 95% *Alectoria spp.*). There is also very sparse herbaceous undergrowth, providing poor forage for caribou.

Other Species:

A game trail leads into this block from the clear cut to the north. Deer and bear sign (i.e., tracks, pellets/scat) was found along the trail.

Block 29

A stand level assessment has not been completed for block 29.

Recommendations

During the July 2 and 3rd field reviews, no evidence of caribou use was observed through the proposed development area. The timber through all of the area surveyed in the proposed cutblocks supports very little lichen, and there is sparse herbaceous undergrowth, providing poor habitat for caribou in all seasons.

PEM-based caribou habitat ratings are high for early winter and spring and medium for summer/fall. Field based habitat ratings are low for all seasons and confirm this area is outside of the caribou special management zone (zone 2).

Apply measures for general biodiversity in silviculture and harvest prescriptions throughout the development area.

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: WHA field cards
- Appendix IV: 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 and GIF field forms and PU field map			
COMMENTS (Reference No. to also be located on Field Map)			
Reference No.			COMMENTS
1			Bear, deer trail. Bear scat. Very low lichen loading. Pw is all dead, and no longer bearing lichen.
2			WHA plot
3			Fresh deer sign feeding along slide chute, WHA plot
4			Moose bed. Heavy browsing (winter) on elder berry and Douglas maple
5			Moose scat
6			Deer scat, and tracks, WHA plot
7			Low lichen loading, WHA plot
8			Bear den
9			
10			
11			
12			

Appendix II: Map

Appendix III: WHA field cards

Appendix IV: PEM Based Caribou Habitat Ratings