

# **Alberta Caribou Committee**

## **Terms of Reference**

Nov. 2, 2005

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### **I. BACKGROUND / CONTEXT:**

In response to recommendations made in the Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan, and received from the Boreal Caribou Committee, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has created the Alberta Caribou Committee (ACC) and is requesting the participation of a broad range of stakeholder groups. The ACC is a multi-stakeholder committee open to representatives from the forest, peat and energy sectors, aboriginal groups, research scientists, environmental interest/conservation groups and various provincial and federal government departments. The Committee is also open to representatives from the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Parks Canada Agency. The ACC replaces the Boreal Caribou Committee, the West Central Alberta Caribou Standing Committee and the Provincial Caribou Recovery Team and is the sole collective group leading caribou conservation and recovery in Alberta.

### **II. GOAL:**

To maintain and recover woodland caribou in Alberta's forest ecosystems while providing opportunities for resource development, following guidance provided by the Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan, as qualified by the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The current and future challenge involves conserving and recovering caribou populations and habitat through use of knowledge-based processes, applied through existing or other mechanisms, as deemed appropriate. This complex challenge will be achieved in an atmosphere of co-operation and trust amongst participants.

### **II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

ACC members, individually and collectively, are guided in their activities by a desire to be:

- *Representative:* Members have the responsibility to effectively represent their organization or constituency.
- *Fair:* Members will strive to find balance in the recommendations they make. This means consideration of environmental, social and economic interests.
- *Cooperative:* The Committee will understand the interests of others and strive to find recommendations that acknowledge shared values.
- *Timely:* The Committee will respond to priority issues in a timely fashion.

- *Innovative*: The Committee will use their expertise and experience to find solutions to caribou recovery, conservation and management issues.
- *Based on sound science*: The Committee's recommendations and actions will be based on sound conservation science; however, lack of complete information or scientific certainty will not impede developing and recommending caribou conservation strategies.
- *Transparent*: The Committee's process, proceedings and products are open to public review and scrutiny.

### **III. MANDATE**

The mandate of the ACC is to bring together the expertise and experience of its members under a consensus based partnership for the purpose of: 1) providing thoughtful advice to government and, 2) implementing or supporting approved caribou population and habitat conservation and recovery programs. This Committee provides advice to government regarding policy and program matters. It does not create government policy or programs. The Committee's work will involve, but not be limited to the following areas:

- **Science and Research**  
There is an expectation that the ACC will oversee and coordinate provincial woodland caribou research. The Committee will provide an ongoing review of existing science and research, will identify research gaps, and will determine and recommend provincial and any caribou herd-level research priorities, with a focus on research needed to advance woodland caribou recovery. The Deputy Minister of Sustainable Resource Development expects that the efforts of independent woodland caribou researchers shall be coordinated through their involvement in the ACC. It is anticipated that the ACC will take the lead role in generating and allocating monies for woodland caribou research within the province.
- **Policy and Practices**  
The ACC may recommend changes to government and industry policies and practices that will support, or are required for, provincial woodland caribou conservation and recovery. This may include, but not be limited to, biological programs, industrial practices, cumulative effects monitoring and management, operating ground rules and industrial best practices. It is anticipated that recommendations will follow guidance provided by the Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan.
- **Caribou Landscape Teams**  
Caribou will be managed across five identified caribou landscapes in the province (see attached map). Caribou Landscape Teams will operate within an approved terms of reference. The ACC will provide direction and support to the Landscape Teams. It will also review all Landscape Team recommendations and provide appropriate advice to government.

- **Caribou Monitoring**

The ACC will develop a provincial caribou-monitoring program for government review and approval. The ACC will, in cooperation with government, undertake or coordinate monitoring of caribou populations and caribou habitat. The ACC will provide periodic caribou monitoring reports to Government.

#### **IV. AUTHORITY**

Through its Governance Board, the ACC reports to the Deputy Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (Figure 1), and is thereby accountable to the Government of Alberta through the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The Committee is also accountable for its recommendations and advice to the people of Alberta in that the meeting minutes, reports and recommendations are available to the public. The Committee may be dissolved at any time as directed by the Deputy Minister. The Committee should review its Terms of Reference every three years, or more frequently if there is consensus to do so, and recommend amendments to the Deputy Minister, who retains the authority to amend the Terms of Reference.

#### **V. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

The ACC will be open to participation from a broad range of stakeholders and others who have interests in caribou conservation. ACC general meetings will be open to participants from industry (forest, oil and gas, peat mining), aboriginal groups (First Nations and Métis), environmental interest/conservation groups, the scientific community, and various provincial and federal government departments.

#### **VI. COMMITTEE OPERATIONS**

The ACC will hold general meetings at least twice a year. These meetings will allow an exchange of information amongst participants, and an opportunity to review and endorse products and proposals brought forward by various subcommittees and working groups. The committee will work on a consensus basis. Most of the work of the committee will be accomplished by its subcommittees and working groups. A government chairperson, with the future option of government and industry co-chairs, will chair the Governance Board and the general meetings.

#### **VII. Participatory Process**

The strength of the ACC is based in the active involvement of all participants at both operational and planning levels and in support from senior levels of government and industry. It is the responsibility of both government and industry participants to advise and receive direction from senior personnel in their sectors.

All participants must be engaged in understanding the issues, learning, and establishing direction for the program. The core strategy involves a knowledge-based, adaptive decision-making process developed and endorsed through consensus. Committee recommendations are provided as advice to government through the Deputy Minister.

## **VII. Consensus**

The ACC general membership and Governance Board will use a general consensus decision-making process whereby participants work collaboratively to develop recommendations that best satisfy their respective interests, while achieving woodland caribou conservation and recovery. Consensus building is the shared responsibility of all ACC participants. A general consensus does not imply unanimity. Dissenting positions will be recorded.

### **Guidelines for achieving general consensus include the following:**

- members must have reasonable opportunity to participate in discussions and review proposals, if possible, before they are brought forward at a meeting;
- it is a member's responsibility to bring their sector's perspective, and any potential concerns, to the table as early in the process as possible;
- it is the role of any dissenting member to provide sufficiently in-depth details as to what they cannot agree to and to offer alternative solutions or potential changes that would make the idea acceptable; and
- it is the responsibility of all members to work with affected sectors to find solutions.

### **Once general consensus has been reached, it is the duty of the Chair to ensure:**

- everyone was heard and has agreed to support the proposal;
- all reasonable alternatives were considered;
- the recommendation addresses the issue and can work; and
- potential impediments have been noted.

### **When general consensus cannot be reached:**

- all conditions, concerns, dissension will be recorded; and
- as a last resort and if deemed of adequate significance, an issue may be outlined and forwarded from the Governance Board to the Deputy Minister of Sustainable Resource Development with alternative courses of action presented.

## VIII. GOVERNANCE BOARD

The mandate of the Governance Board is to coordinate ACC activities and serve as a liaison between the ACC and senior levels of government. The membership of the Governance Board will reflect the broad membership of the ACC. ACC staff report to the Governance Board. Its membership will consist of:

**Aboriginal Members** shall consist of one First Nations and one Métis representative. Representatives must have interests in caribou conservation landscapes. Representatives will be identified by the appropriate aboriginal organizations.

**Industry Members** shall consist of three representatives from the forest industry (which includes a representative from the Alberta Forest Products Association), and three members from the Oil and Gas industry (which includes a representative from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers).

**Non-Government Organization Members** shall consist of two representatives from environmental interest/conservation groups that have an interest in caribou management within Alberta.

**Science Advisors** shall consist of one or two respected members of the scientific community who have knowledge and experience in caribou population and/or habitat management. These individuals will also be associated with the Alberta Caribou Committee research program.

**Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Team Leader.**

**Government of Alberta Members** shall consist of four senior officials and a Chairperson from the Department of Sustainable Resource Development and one representative from the Department of Energy.

**One member from the public-at-large.**

### **Roles And Responsibilities**

#### **Members must:**

- Be aware of caribou conservation, recovery and habitat/landscape issues and options in Alberta.
- Maintain a communication protocol for soliciting input from their constituency to take forward to the Governance Board and to convey Governance Board recommendations and advice back to their constituency.

- Represent the interests of their sector while working towards the objective of woodland caribou conservation and recovery in a collaborative and constructive manner with others on the Governance Board.
- Allocate the time required to complete the work of the Governance Board, including attendance at meetings.
- Respect the opinions and experience of other Governance Board members.
- Bring a wider perspective to the Governance Board than just that of their organization or their sector.

### **Operations**

The Governance Board will meet at least four times a year with the potential for project teams or additional meetings. The Governance Board will host general meetings of the full committee at least annually, with a target of two general committee meetings per year. It is anticipated that the Board will acquire the services of a Program Manager and any other staff and consulting or facilitation services that it may require.

## **IX. SUBCOMMITTEES**

The ACC will have a number of subcommittees and working groups under the direction and authority of the Governance Board. These bodies will include a Research and Monitoring Subcommittee, a Data Management Working Group, a Funding Subcommittee, a Communications Subcommittee, and other subcommittees and working groups as required to meet the operational needs of the ACC. The ACC will manage and coordinate the efforts of landscape planning teams created by the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Fish and Wildlife Division. It is expected that each subcommittee will create a terms of reference for their operations, for review and approval by the Governance Board.

### **Research and Monitoring Subcommittee**

The Research and Monitoring Subcommittee will provide ongoing, independent review of existing science and research and identify research gaps that impede efforts to conserve and recover caribou populations or habitats. It is anticipated that this subcommittee will provide leadership and coordination for caribou research in the province. Efforts of independent researchers should be coordinated through their involvement in the ACC. This subcommittee will be responsible for the dissemination of information on the results of research and monitoring activities (i.e. results of analyses) to interested parties. This Subcommittee is also responsible for the development and implementation of a program that monitors caribou populations and habitats to support the planning and management needs of the ACC.

### **Data Management Working Group**

The Data Management Working Group, agreed to and recommended by the steering committee of the Boreal Caribou Committee, will be retained by the ACC. This working group will provide ongoing data management services for the ACC, the Landscape Planning Teams, and the Research and Monitoring Subcommittee.

### **Funding Subcommittee**

The mandate of the Funding Subcommittee is to secure funds to ensure successful completion of projects conducted by the ACC.

### **Communications Subcommittee**

The mandate of the Communications Subcommittee is to develop a flow of information to Committee members and others using various tools including newsletters, brochures, videos, the internet, scientific presentations, progress reports, etc.

Communication is a two-way interaction between interested parties. As such, the Communications Subcommittee will serve an important function in sharing the objectives of the ACC with other interested parties and seeking their input.

## **X. COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS**

The ACC will communicate with the media and other bodies subject to the following:

- Reports, key recommendations or other public announcements will be made only with the knowledge and coordination of the Governance Board.
- It is recommended that members that are approached by the media or public directly should refer requests for specific information about the operations of the ACC to the Chair of the Governance Board or the Program Manager. If the request is received from the member's own stakeholder group or sector, members may wish to respond themselves or through their organization. A member may respond to media or public enquiries directly or refer those enquiries to the appropriate member(s) depending on the request. Responses should, however, be respectful of the ACC and Subcommittee membership and to the collaborative Committee and Subcommittee process.

- The Committee will be guided by a communications plan identifying roles and responsibilities of members speaking on behalf of the Committee.

**NOTES:** *The ACC is a new organization. An objective of this initial Terms of Reference is to create an efficient and effective organization. The Committee is encouraged to re-assess and recommend changes to this structure, as it deems appropriate.*

*In some cases Alberta's caribou populations and issues cross jurisdictional boundaries. It is therefore necessary that the ACC work with adjacent jurisdictions to achieve caribou conservation objectives.*

Figure 1

Structure of the Alberta Caribou Committee

