



# The Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories partner on Boreal Caribou Conservation

From: [Environment and Climate Change Canada](#)

## Background

### Boreal Caribou in the Northwest Territories

The boreal caribou population in the Northwest Territories is about 6,000-7,000 and they still live across its historical range. Distinct from migratory barren-ground caribou and from northern mountain caribou, boreal caribou live in small groups in the forest east of the Mackenzie Mountains. The Northwest Territories range consists of about 441,000 km<sup>2</sup> of mostly intact boreal forest and is 98% within the Northwest Territories, with 2% in the Yukon.

The boreal caribou population in the Northwest Territories is considered self-sustaining due to its habitat being approximately 69% undisturbed. Wildfires account for most habitat disturbance, and human-caused disturbance is relatively low. However, the amount of undisturbed habitat has decreased over the last five years, mostly due to large fires. This will be taken into consideration as part of the range-planning exercise. While population trends vary by region, there is evidence of population decline in the southern part of the Northwest Territories, where the majority of the territory's boreal caribou live.

Boreal caribou have been listed as Threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* since 2003 and listed under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* since 2014. Recovery strategies for the species have been published under both Acts. The Government of the Northwest Territories is working with renewable resources boards and Indigenous governments and organizations to implement the conservation and recovery approaches outlined in the *Recovery Strategy for the Boreal Caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in the Northwest Territories* (2017).

### What is a conservation agreement?

Section 11 of the federal *Species at Risk Act* enables a federal minister to enter into an agreement with any other government in Canada, organization, or person to benefit a species at risk or enhance its survival in the wild. These agreements set out conservation measures consistent with the *Species at Risk Act*, including measures for:

- monitoring the status of a species
- developing and implementing recovery strategies, range plans, action plans, and management plans
- protecting the species' habitat, including its critical habitat
- undertaking research projects in support of recovery efforts for the species



The agreement between the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories describes how the parties, the Conference of Management Authorities (CMA) and Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities will work together to support a healthy and sustainable population of boreal caribou in the Northwest Territories.

## Summary of the conservation agreement

The agreement aims to advance work on boreal caribou recovery in the Northwest Territories over the next five years. Specifically, the agreement commits to achieving recovery for the local population by maintaining conditions that support its self-sustaining status through the following measures, which are based on the recommendations of the Recovery Strategy for the Boreal Caribou in the Northwest Territories:

- Engagement and consultation on range-planning framework
- Development of regional range plans
- Implementation of the southern range plans
- Evaluation of sustainable harvest rates

The Government of the Northwest Territories will lead the development and implementation of many measures in the agreement along with the CMA and Indigenous governments, organizations and communities. The CMA is the group of renewable resources boards and governments in the Northwest Territories that share management responsibility for species at risk. Along with the Governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories, it includes the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT), Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board, and Tłı̄chǫ Government. The Acho Dene Koe First Nation, Akaitcho Territory Government, Dehcho First Nations, Kátł'odeeche First Nation, North Slave Métis Alliance, Northwest Territory Métis Nation, and Salt River First Nation are also invited to participate in CMA meetings.

Environment and Climate Change Canada will support the work of this agreement over five years with funding from Canada's Nature Fund to develop and implement range plans for boreal caribou, and support engagement of Indigenous partners. Additionally, Environment and Climate Change Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program is contributing funding for the development of guidelines and a mapping tool to assist key resource development sectors on mitigating impacts to boreal caribou and their habitat.

## Boreal Caribou Range Planning Framework

Together with co-management partners, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been working on a Framework that will guide the development of five regional boreal caribou range plans. The draft Boreal Caribou Range Planning Framework calls for a balanced approach to maintaining a healthy and self-sustaining boreal caribou population while ensuring sustainable economic growth opportunities for residents of the Northwest Territories. The Framework, with the *Recovery Strategy for the Boreal Caribou in the NWT* and *Implementation Agreement*, are three tools developed in collaboration with Indigenous governments and organizations, renewable resources boards and other partners that underpin the Government of the



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Northwest Territories' 'made-in-the-North' approach to boreal caribou protection and habitat management.