



City of Revelstoke

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

May 31, 2019

Caribou Recovery Program
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Victoria, B.C. V8W 9C5

To Whom It May Concern;

Please find attached our official response to the proposed draft Section 11 Agreement as part of the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program, which is being submitted in writing to the Caribou Recovery Program in addition to the completion of the online survey.

As Mayor of the City of Revelstoke and long-term resident of a community that has been on the forefront of caribou recovery efforts since the founding of the Columbia Mountain Caribou Research Project in 1992, I wish to share our concern with how the caribou consultation process has been rolled out in this region, notwithstanding our support in principle of the bilateral draft Section 11 Agreement.

Together with fellow Council members and residents of this community, we call for greater transparency and the need to build trust in the engagement process, and emphasize the importance of being at the table for subsequent decision-making concerning herd planning, land use planning, and additional conservation efforts. I am happy to hear that yesterday Premier Horgan has committed to a one-hour telephone conference call regarding the Caribou Recovery Plan with MLA Doug Clovechok, Mayor Rysz of District of Sicamous, and myself so that we can share our concerns.

We look forward to working in collaboration with the Province on the next phase of the Recovery Plan, and to working with our industry, recreation and tourism stakeholder to undertake socio-economic research and analysis on the potential impacts of recovery measures and management actions in our region.

Regards,

Mayor Gary Sulz

Enc.

cc: I. Bron, Director of Community Economic Development

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Council Report

File No.: 4710-01

To: His Worship Mayor Sulz and Members of City Council
From: Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development
Date: May 27, 2019
Subject: Caribou Recovery Program

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT the Director of Community Economic Development be authorized to submit the City of Revelstoke's response to the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

CAO Comments:

Reviewed for Council consideration. DL

Background:

In May 2018 the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, in response to applications for an Emergency Order under Section 80 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) to protect critical habitat of the Southern Mountain Caribou population, made the determination that "BC mountain caribou are under imminent threat and immediate intervention is required if BC's herds are to be recovered." The *Species at Risk Act* enables the federal government to enact orders that would protect caribou and their habitat from further development and disturbance. SARA also enables the federal government to enter into a Section 11 Agreement with the province to benefit species at risk by working collaboratively with the provincial government, local communities and stakeholders to develop solutions based on the best available information on caribou recovery and to consider the economic context of the necessary recovery measures.

In response the provincial Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) prepared a Provincial Caribou Recovery Program. City staff met with industry stakeholders and representatives from FLNRORD in May of 2018 to discuss the potential impacts of the imminent threat order and the Provincial response to protecting and preserving BC's caribou populations. At that meeting the Province indicated that if BC's efforts to protect Caribou fell short, the federal government could step in and further prohibit both commercial and recreational activity in core and matrix caribou habitat.



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The City was given the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Caribou Recovery Program as part of the provincial engagement process, and in June 2018 the Director of Community Economic Development submitted the City of Revelstoke's response (See June 12, 2018 [Council Report](#) / [Attachments](#)). The submission stated the City's support for the proposed British Columbia Caribou Recovery Program and a Species at Risk Act Section 11 Conservation Agreement between the Province and the Government of Canada, and emphasized that it was "imperative that in considering potential changes to the regulations, program design and land use accessibility of the Provincial Caribou Recovery Strategy Program, the Province continue to take a collaborative science-based approach that considers both the impacts on caribou preservation and the socio-economic impacts of those decisions."

The City's submission indicated the evidence of a long-term collaborative approach between the City of Revelstoke, Parks Canada, provincial government, the forestry industry, tourism, local scientists, and community members to both protect the caribou and support the commercial and recreational land uses that are a vital part of the community and region's economic viability. It cited work undertaken by the Columbia Mountain Caribou Research Project since its founding in 1992 and included significant management actions occurring in the Revelstoke Shuswap Local Planning Unit including:

- Habitat Protection
- Management of Backcountry Recreation
- Primary Prey Management
- Predator Management
- Maternal Penning

The Submission also identified potential socio-economic impacts (summarized in June 12, 2018 [Council Report](#) / [Attachments](#)) including:

- Local Employment and Industry Viability in forestry, tourism and recreation, hospitality, retail, arts and culture
- Social Impacts of the reduction or elimination of our tourism and forestry operations
- Avalanche Safety and Awareness and its reliance on data gathered by backcountry recreational operators

Final recommendations in the Submission requested that a new Provincial Caribou Recovery Program:

- ensure a Science-based collaborative approach that continues to include input from "local stakeholders to develop and execute a program that considers multiple levers and management actions, and prioritizes actions that both protect and preserve Caribou and take into account socio-economic impacts",
- build on the previous work to "ensure that future activities are built upon the learnings from previous project successes", and
- exchange of data to ensure that current Caribou Recovery Program data is shared publicly to enable stakeholders "to understand caribou behaviour and movements and allow them to participate more fully in recovery efforts."



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The new provincial Caribou Recovery Program (<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/caribou/>) is intended to align the province's work with the federal Species at Risk Act objectives and means "significant changes in how the Province will apply laws and regulation, support, plan, carry out, monitor and record this work", including land use planning, herd plans, forest practices, habitat restoration and protection, recreation management, predator control, penning, supplemental feeding, etc.

The Recovery Program also identifies the importance of strengthening relationships with sector groups and other jurisdictions as well as better communication with stakeholders and the public. In the spring of 2019 the Province embarked on a period of engagement that includes consultation meetings with stakeholders and the public through-out the province. City Council met with representatives from the Ministry in April and participated in a well-attended public open house on April 15, when community members had the opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions of the Ministry representatives. The Province has asked that feedback on the Draft Section 11 Agreement be provided by May 31st.

The next steps identified in the draft Section 11 Agreement commit B.C. to finalize the Provincial Caribou Recovery Plan in summer 2019 in order to provide certainty to affected natural resource users, actively cooperate with partners in caribou recovery, and to increase public confidence via accountable, effective program delivery and management. Following the finalization of the Recovery Plan, the Province is committed to complete Herd Plans for Southern Mountain Caribou in a phased approach within two years of the Agreement date, and during the development of the Phase 2 Herd Plans to engage with stakeholders and public at the local level.

Discussion:

The previous Council's endorsement of the bilateral draft Section 11 Agreement emphasized the importance of collaboration with stakeholders and community members, and the consideration of the socio-economic impacts of measures undertaken as part of the Caribou Recovery Program.

The current Council has continued to support the development of the Section 11 Agreement and the community consultations that have taken place. In addition, Mayor Sulz, members of Council, and staff have participated in local and regional efforts to provide input to the draft Section 11 Agreement and the Caribou Recovery Program, including meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, Revelstoke Accommodation Association, the Community Futures Board, the Economic Development Commission, industry stakeholders, the local snowmobile club and regional bodies such as SILGA (Southern Interior Local Government Association). In addition to calls for greater transparency and the need to build trust in the engagement process, the clear message that has been articulated is the importance of being 'at the table' for subsequent decision-making with regards to herd planning, land use planning, and additional conservation efforts.

Discussion has also taken place around the importance of conducting local socio-economic impact research and analysis, and to this end Community Futures has proposed to work with the department of Community Economic Development and their industry and business partners



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to put together a list of affected stakeholders with the goal of forming a local working group. This group will be comprised of local industry, environmental groups, recreation user groups, and other stakeholders in the community and will:

- act as a source of credible local information on the Caribou Recovery Program,
- work collaboratively to contribute to a locally-led response focused on the recovery of the caribou,
- partner with stakeholders to research and assess the impact on the local economy of the various industries which may be affected by recovery efforts, and
- assist in mitigating economic impacts on local stakeholder groups

At present, fear and uncertainty about what is to come from Caribou Recovery efforts have the potential to create conflict and divisiveness in the community. It is imperative that all user groups work collaboratively and respectfully to find and contribute to workable solutions to both support the goals Section 11 Agreement and to mitigate any socio-economic impacts of Recovery efforts.

Financial / Risk Implications:

Significant changes to the Caribou Recovery Program and local Herd Plans that limit or constrain commercial or recreational access to land could have a detrimental economic impact on numerous businesses operating within Revelstoke and the surrounding region.

Strategic Plan Reference:

1. Quality of Life - The City of Revelstoke will emphasize quality of life issues including social, active living, cultural experience and recreation opportunities.
2. Planning for the Future - the City of Revelstoke will ensure that City services encourage and support community vision towards development for the future
3. Economic Development and Business Support - The City of Revelstoke will take initiatives to attract, promote and support economic development.

Others Consulted:

Economic Development Commission

Chamber of Commerce

Environmental Sustainability Coordinator

Community Futures

Revelstoke Accommodation Association/See Revelstoke

Revelstoke Snowmobile Club



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Attachments:

Attachment I – Tourism Industry Association of BC – Recovery of Southern Mountain Caribou in British Columbia Policy

Respectfully submitted,

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development

TIABC POLICY – RECOVERY OF SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN CARIBOU IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

For tourism businesses across British Columbia, recovery programs for species-at-risk such as southern mountain caribou have the potential to maintain and support the natural values that – given that they are critical components of world-class tourism experiences -- are shared with guests from around the world. However, those same initiatives, if developed or implemented without meaningful involvement of sector associations and businesses, and without a full understanding of economic and social implications, can – through restrictions or prohibitions -- have unnecessarily devastating impacts on tourism businesses.

Issue Background & Context

- Canada's federal *Species at Risk Act* (a.k.a. SARA) has been in place since 2002;
- The purposes of SARA are to prevent wildlife species in Canada from disappearing, to provide for the recovery of wildlife species that are extirpated (no longer exist in the wild in Canada), endangered, or threatened as a result of human activity, and to manage species of special concern to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened. Much of the focus of this act is on habitat, rather than on the animals themselves;
- Until recently, SARA had only been an issue for wildlife species with very small home ranges (e.g. Sage Grouse). However, it's contemplation of habitat protections and operational restrictions for wide-ranging species such as Southern Mountain Caribou have made the implications of SARA to BC's business community (including tourism) of greater concern; and
- Canada and BC are currently developing a joint strategy for mountain caribou recovery that includes an agreement under Section 11 of SARA, a partnership with the West Moberly and Saulteau First Nations, and eventually, specific plans for the 54 herds in BC.

Policy Evaluation

- Tourism is a sector of BC's economy that has the greatest potential to be a showcase for the integration of economic and environmental considerations, and to model sustainable behaviours. This is particularly true in the many businesses in, or partnering with the Indigenous tourism sector;
- Tourism's impacts on, and possible benefits to mountain caribou are not well understood by government staff at any levels;

- Tourism marketing, through Destination Canada, Destination BC, and regional and community DMOs, often focuses on protecting natural values and sharing those with guests from around the globe;
- Tourism is often lumped together with public recreation, which downplays the significant opportunities that professional, managed tourism businesses have to bring in the form of innovative solutions;
- At present, the approaches taken by both the federal and provincial government mountain caribou recovery initiatives have traditionally shown and continue to show a lack of meaningful engagement with tourism businesses and communities that rely on tourism, and tend to be built on the opinions of government staff rather than science;
- The implications of mountain caribou recovery on tourism and government's weak consideration of economic (and social) impacts means that major decisions on habitat protection (and the impact of those decisions on business) may not be made in a fully-informed way;
- There are a range of innovative solutions that tourism sectors and businesses can bring to the recovery table if the sector and its businesses are engaged in a meaningful way; and
- The uncertainty created by this situation is having negative impacts on investments in natural resource sectors such as tourism.

Policy Recommendations

- TIABC recognizes the need for suitable caribou habitat and supports ensuring those habitats retain their value for caribou recovery;
- TIABC recognizes that predators are the number one reason for caribou decline within British Columbia and supports predator management efforts;
- TIABC supports landscape and ecosystem-based management efforts, and does not believe that species-by-species management is adequate. Managing for healthy forests, clean air, and good water equals positive outcomes;
- TIABC believes in pro-active management and does not support waiting until the situation is dire. However, it is important to make fully informed decisions, and thoughtfully use the right tools to attempt recovery;
- TIABC believes that local land use planning and provincial consistency are important, as is applying ongoing adaptive management techniques to recover caribou populations;
- TIABC believes that BC must ensure the approach taken to recover caribou populations must make sense for recovery outcomes in the context of ROI for the time and money invested;
- Tourism activities can be dynamic and respond to the locations of caribou. BC should not create static solutions for a dynamic problem and should enable activities in caribou habitat that are responsive to local wildlife populations;
- Government should recognize that the vast majority of tourism operators are reputable, cooperative and desire the same outcomes for the preservation of habitat. However, rogue operators with disregard for regulations and habitat conservation need to be dealt with through penalties and other means;

- Tourism is a light and flexible footprint and should be encouraged. More than most other sectors, it can model behaviours that support caribou recovery and can – if the sector is engaged in a meaningful way -- offer solutions that are unique to our sector versus other land users;
- Adventure tourism can enhance rural economic development while maintaining species and their habitats;
- Government should recognize and take advantage of the work already being done by sectors (e.g. Helicat) to develop innovative solutions to recover caribou; and
- Government at all levels should ensure that fully informed decisions are made around southern mountain caribou that include socio-economic considerations.

May 2019