

# Executive Summary

## Caribou Recovery Plan

### The Purpose of the Caribou Recovery Plan

Woodland Caribou are a threatened species in western Canada. In Jasper National Park fall monitoring counts show that the southern caribou population decreased by almost 50% between 1988 and 2004. If this trend continues the south Jasper caribou herd could be wiped-out within 40 years.

The Canada National Parks Act mandates the Parks Canada Agency to ensure that national parks remain unimpaired for future generations. This means Parks Canada has a duty to ensure that caribou remain part of the park's future. Canada's Species at Risk Act also requires Parks Canada to develop recovery plans and identify critical habitat for species that are endangered or threatened.

### The Caribou Recovery Team

In 2003, Jasper National Park pulled together a broadly-based local caribou recovery team to evaluate what is known about caribou and to develop and debate a wide range of recovery options.

The Recovery team includes 4 Parks Canada staff members and 8 Jasper residents.

The team is made up of biologists, long time residents, skiers, hikers and business operators whom all provide a diversity of knowledge.

### The Recommendations

The Recovery team developed a wide range of options to try and assist the survival of the declining woodland caribou herd. Based on the input Parks Canada developed 15 recommendations that will be used to create an **Action Implementation Plan**, which will include phasing, budget and timelines of the recommendations.

### Action Implementation Plan

Phase 1 will be implemented over the next 2 years, beginning in May 2005 with the help of members of the Jasper community and other concerned stakeholders.

- Continue studying caribou behaviour and learn more about how caribou, predators and people affect one another.

- Try out innovative management techniques like “fladry” – barriers made of rags – to discourage wolves from following ski trails into sensitive caribou winter ranges.
- Make winter roads less attractive to caribou by eliminating the use of salt in gravel, to reduce both road kills and the time caribou spend in valley-bottoms where they are most vulnerable to wolves.
- Eliminate the operational use of helicopters by Parks Canada over caribou ranges and identify acceptable flight paths to private aircraft users.
- Offer skiers new track-set ski trails into areas where there are no caribou, and eliminate track-setting into important caribou wintering areas in the Maligne valley. We will be asking for public input and suggestions on implementing this initiative.
- Restrict dogs to trails where there are no caribou to reduce the stress caribou experience when they see wolf-like animals.
- Educate hikers and skiers and improve official trails so that people can choose to avoid off-trail areas that are important to caribou during the critical calf-raising and wintering periods.

The information and advice of the recovery team is the basis for this phase 1 (2005-2007). It is based on the best available scientific and community knowledge, and it addresses the full range of issues that may be contributing to caribou decline. The caribou recovery team will continue to meet and review monitoring information to revise and update the plan for future phases. Future plans developed in Jasper will be integrated with the Provincial and National Woodland Caribou Recovery Strategies.

This is an ambitious and multi-faceted action plan and it is built around the principle that the people who live in, visit, and enjoy Jasper National Park care about caribou. We all want caribou to be part of this national park’s future. Given good knowledge, people will make choices that benefit caribou.

### **Beyond Phase I**

Some of the options discussed by the caribou recovery team will not be implemented in phase I because they may not be effective or necessary, there are policy constraints, or they are not currently practical. Options that will not be pursued during phase I include: closing trails that are in prime caribou habitat, modifying winter use of the Maligne Road (through closure or the use of wolf barriers), and transplanting caribou from elsewhere to supplement Jasper’s population.

### **Options Considered & Rejected**

Measures such as wolf control, wolf sterilization, use of road-killed animals to bait predators away from caribou areas, closure of the Icefields Parkway in winter, and short-term trail or road closures when radio-collared caribou are in a given area were considered and rejected.

### **The Next Step**

If monitoring indicates that caribou numbers are not improving during phase I or if new information shows that further measures are needed, the caribou recovery team will be asked to provide recommendations for a phase II action plan in 2007.