

Plan for the International Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd

1. BACKGROUND

A. The Porcupine Caribou Herd

The Porcupine Caribou Herd is a population of barren-ground caribou that ranges across two Canadian Territories and the State of Alaska. The herd is of major economic and cultural importance to a number of Alaskan and Canadian communities located on or near its range. The herd is also of great public interest and used by non-local people. Porcupine caribou are a key component of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska and Ivvavik National Park in the Yukon.

B. The International Conservation Agreement

Conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd can only be effective through coordination among the various political jurisdictions responsible for its management. In 1987, the Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd (Agreement) was signed by which both countries agreed to cooperate on fundamental requirements to conserve the herd.

C. The International Porcupine Caribou Board

The Agreement provided for the formation of an International Porcupine Caribou Board (IPCB). The Agreement established the IPCB's role as one of facilitating coordination, communication, and cooperation between the Parties, and to provide advice and recommendations to the Parties. The IPCB's purpose is to further the objectives of the Agreement and to conserve the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat.

Clause 4(d)3 of the Agreement empowers the IPCB to make recommendations on "cooperative conservation planning for the Porcupine caribou herd throughout its range."

2. THE CONCEPT OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

A. Purpose

The International Conservation Plan (Plan) focuses on identifying and coordinating aspects of Porcupine caribou management that require international cooperation. The Plan outlines IPCB consensus on what areas require coordination, and a mechanism to monitor the Parties support of the Agreement.

B. Operation

The Plan is based upon the four principle objectives of the Agreement. Under each of these objectives, the Plan identifies areas requiring international cooperation and recommends what such cooperation should entail.

For each of the cooperative initiatives, the Plan proceeds to describe the IPCB's role and actions. In most cases, the actions consist of recommendations from the IPCB to the Parties, and often

request responses from the Parties. The responses will be used by the IPCB for monitoring support of the Agreement by the Parties and for informing the public.

Above all, the Plan has been designed as a functional document. Thus, all IPCB actions are specific rather than general and recommend a product or undertaking that can be reviewed by the IPCB. It is intended that the Plan be phased in over several years to ultimately establish an operating mechanism composed mainly of background reports and annual updates through which implementation of the Agreement can be guided and assessed.

This Plan may be revised and updated by the IPCB as needed to address changing conditions of the herd, new conservation issues related to the herd or user concerns. Throughout the Plan, the terms conserve or conservation have the meaning as defined in Clause 1.c., of the Agreement (1987).

3. PLAN OBJECTIVES, IPCB ROLES AND ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE A To conserve the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat through international cooperation and coordination so that the risk of irreversible damage or long-term adverse effects as a result of use of caribou or their habitat is minimized.

1. Herd Status

To cooperate in monitoring the status of the Porcupine caribou herd, including population characteristics, health and physical condition, and contaminants.

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend programs for monitoring herd status. (Clauses 4(d) and 4(e) of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

- a) Recommend a joint technical committee be formed to coordinate and report on research and monitoring of the Porcupine caribou herd.
- b) Recommend an annual herd status statement be prepared by the Parties for the IPCB.

2. Harvest

To collect and share harvest data and to mutually determine harvest limits.

Harvest Data

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend actions for the collecting and sharing of harvest data. (Clause 4(d)1 of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

- a) Recommend the management agencies, in consultation with users, prepare a report on the methods that have been used to collect harvest data and evaluate their relative reliability.
- b) Recommend the Parties report annual harvests and data collection methods to the IPCB for inclusion in its reports.

Harvest Limits

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend overall harvest and harvest limits for each country. (Clause 4(d)4 of the Agreement).

IPCB Actions:

Recommend the management agencies, in consultation with users, jointly prepare guidelines for when harvest limits will be considered.

3. Habitat

To: a) take appropriate action to conserve the herd's habitat; b) ensure the herd's habitat is given effective consideration in evaluating proposed activities; c) notify and consult where an activity is likely to cause a significant impact; d) avoid or minimize activities that would significantly disrupt migration or other important behavior patterns of the herd.

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend actions for monitoring and conserving the habitat of the herd. (Clauses 4 (d) and 4 (e) of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

a) Recommend the management agencies monitor habitat quality and land use throughout the range of the herd and report their findings to the IPCB.

b) Recommend the management agencies submit to the IPCB a summary of proposed activities which may significantly affect the herd's habitat and update the summary in a timely manner.

c) Review, and comment, if proposed activities have been subjected to appropriate impact-assessment and review, and have adequately considered cumulative impacts and mitigation.

4. Sensitive Habitat

To identify sensitive habitats deserving special consideration for the Porcupine caribou herd and to conserve such habitats.

IPCB Role: To identify, advise on and recommend actions to conserve sensitive habitats for the Porcupine caribou herd. (Clause 4.d.5 of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

a) Prepare, in consultation with users, a report identifying sensitive habitats and current management regimes, and report to management agencies.

b) Recommend each management agency, in consultation with users, review for adequacy their management regimes on sensitive habitats and update the IPCB when required.

OBJECTIVE B To ensure opportunities for customary and traditional uses of the Porcupine caribou herd.

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend ways of ensuring opportunities for customary and traditional uses of the herd. (Clauses 3(b); 3(f); 3(g); 4(d)4 of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

- a) Recommend the management agencies, in consultation with users, prepare a report describing the customary and traditional uses of the Porcupine caribou herd.
- b) Recommend each management agency provide statements on laws, regulations and policies affecting the customary and traditional uses of Porcupine caribou.
- c) Review, and comment, if proposed activities have adequately considered the interests of users of Porcupine caribou.

OBJECTIVE C To enable users of Porcupine caribou to participate in the international coordination of the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat.

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend ways to enable user participation in the international coordination of Porcupine caribou conservation. (Clause 2(c) of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

- a) Recommend each Party ensure user representation on, and in the activities of, the IPCB.

OBJECTIVE D To encourage cooperation and communication among governments, users of Porcupine caribou, and others to achieve the objectives of the Agreement.

IPCB Role: To advise on and recommend ways to encourage, and to facilitate, communication among governments, users and others. (Clause 2(d) of the Agreement)

IPCB Actions:

- a) Recommend each management agency report to the IPCB the content and methods of communications undertaken each year concerning the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd.
- b) Recommend means for management agencies to achieve effective communication with users.
- c) Summarize and report on the status and conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd as appropriate.
- d) Provide summaries of all IPCB meetings and activities to the public.