



Woodland Caribou Recovery

Backgrounder: Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, Banff & Jasper National Parks

A Need for Change

Environment Canada is the lead agency in recovery planning for the southern mountain population of Woodland caribou, a species listed as threatened in Canada's *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The revised management plans need to incorporate Parks Canada's strategies for caribou conservation.

Background

- Parks Canada is preparing a draft conservation strategy for Woodland caribou in national parks, which will be included in SARA's national recovery strategy and Environment Canada's action plans.
- The A la Peche herd, which includes approximately 150 caribou, is found in the northern part of Jasper National Park; there are also approximately 130 caribou in the southern portion of the park, including 105 in the Tonquin area. The number of caribou in the Maligne (5) and Brazeau (15) has declined since 2000.
- The number of caribou in Banff National Park, previously estimated as fewer than 10, has decreased even further, as a result of recent caribou deaths caused by avalanche.
- Approximately 200 caribou roam through Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks and adjacent provincial lands; less than 20 animals are in the parks at any given time.
- Parks Canada cooperates with neighbouring jurisdictions in British Columbia and Alberta, and consults with caribou experts.
- Caribou are important to ecological integrity, biodiversity, and people's 'connection to place.'
- Well adapted for winter, caribou spread out to avoid predators.
- Caribou are vulnerable to changes in habitat, land use, and climate.
- Parks Canada will address five key factors that threaten caribou. Park specific plans will reflect local and regional circumstances.
 1. *Predator-Prey Dynamics* – An increase in the number of elk and deer as a result of habitat changes has attracted more predators, increasing the risk of predation for caribou.
 2. *Predator Access* – The woodland caribou avoid predators and other ungulates by living at high elevations where snow is deeper. While wolves tend to avoid deep snow, ski/snowshoe tracks and groomed trails improve their access to this habitat.
 3. *Disturbance* – Human activity may displace caribou from their preferred habitat and cause potential problems for their health and population.
 4. *Habitat Loss* – Industry and recreation can reduce the availability of suitable habitat, which can lead to fragmentation of the population.
 5. *Small Population Effect* – Very small populations, such as the Banff and Maligne herds, exacerbate the other factors, increase the risks associated with catastrophic events, and introduce possible genetic hazards such as inbreeding.

Existing Management Plan Direction

- Continue to work with governmental, non-governmental, and industry partners to maintain or restore regional connectivity for caribou.
- Manage human use, fire, and restoration activities to maintain or restore connectivity, habitat effectiveness, and security areas for caribou.
- Continue to monitor caribou populations and related ecological integrity indicators.
- Develop and implement human management techniques in order to reduce potential impacts on caribou.

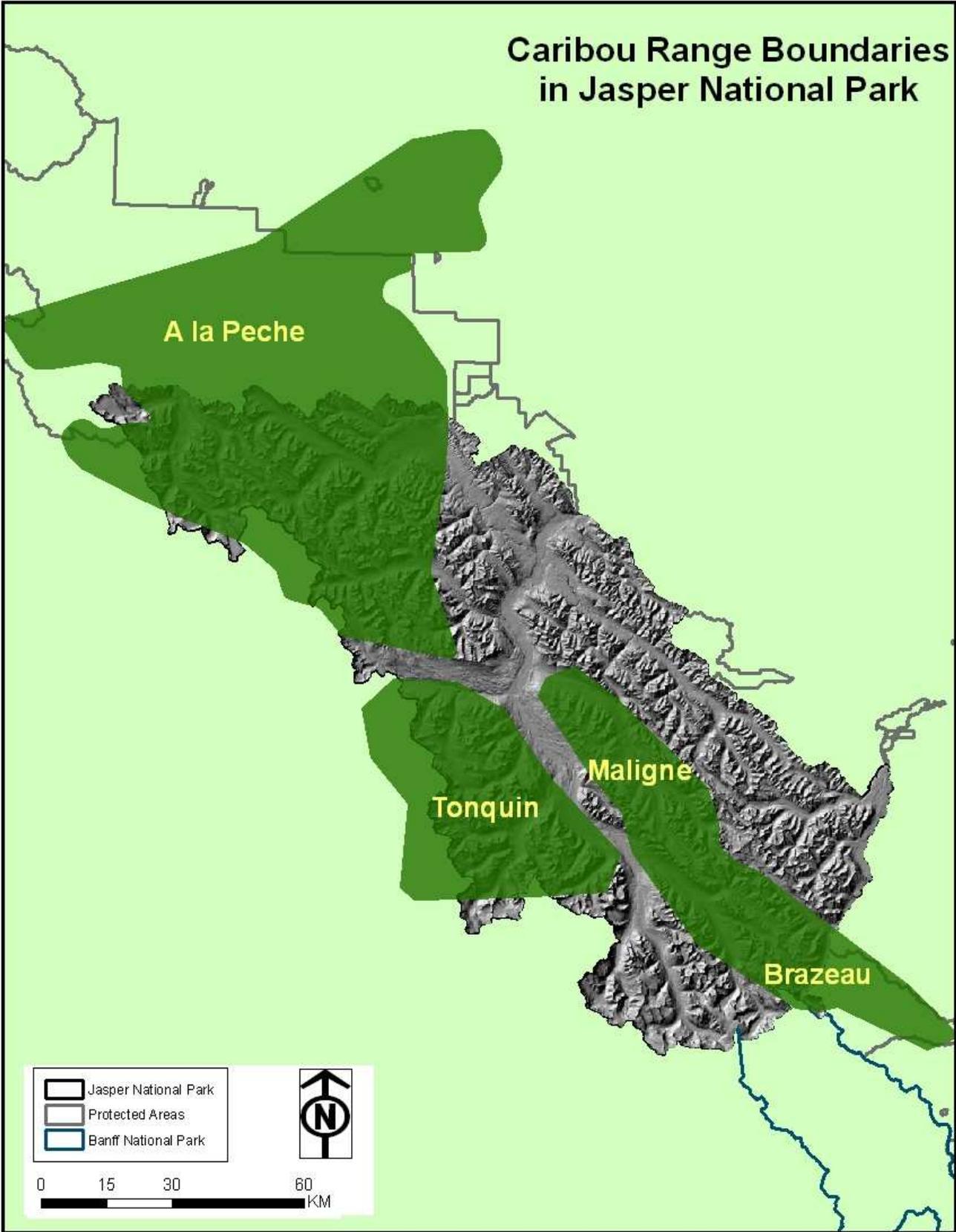
Considerations

- Interim measures currently in effect in the four parks will serve as the basis for conservation measures in the revised management plans.
- The combined expertise and experience of the public, Aboriginal groups, recreational users, and scientists is required to achieve the desired outcomes for caribou recovery.
- The updated management plans will address opportunities for Canadians to experience and learn about caribou and caribou habitat.

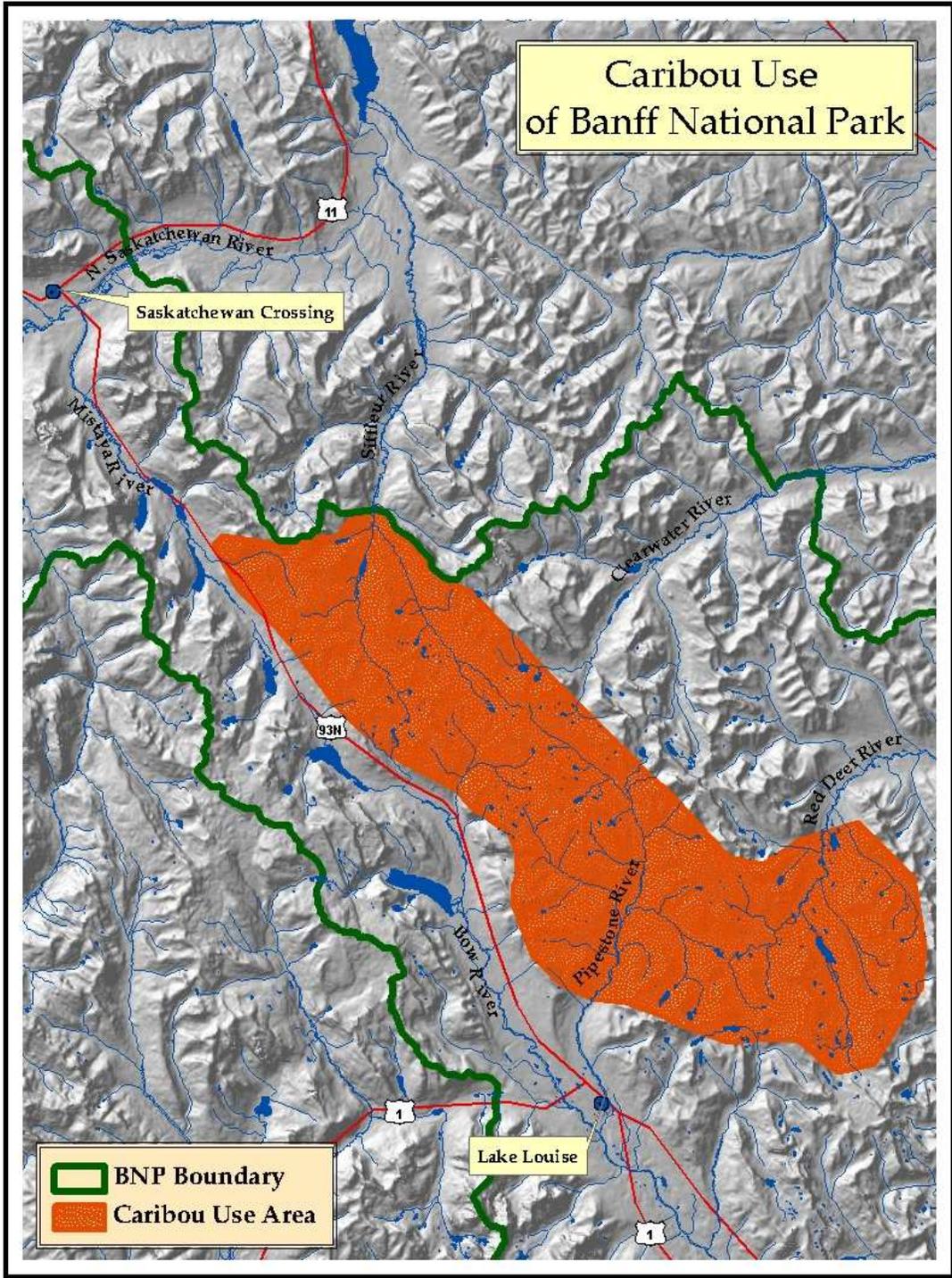
New Directions

Parks Canada welcomes public comments on the following proposed direction for the revised management plan.

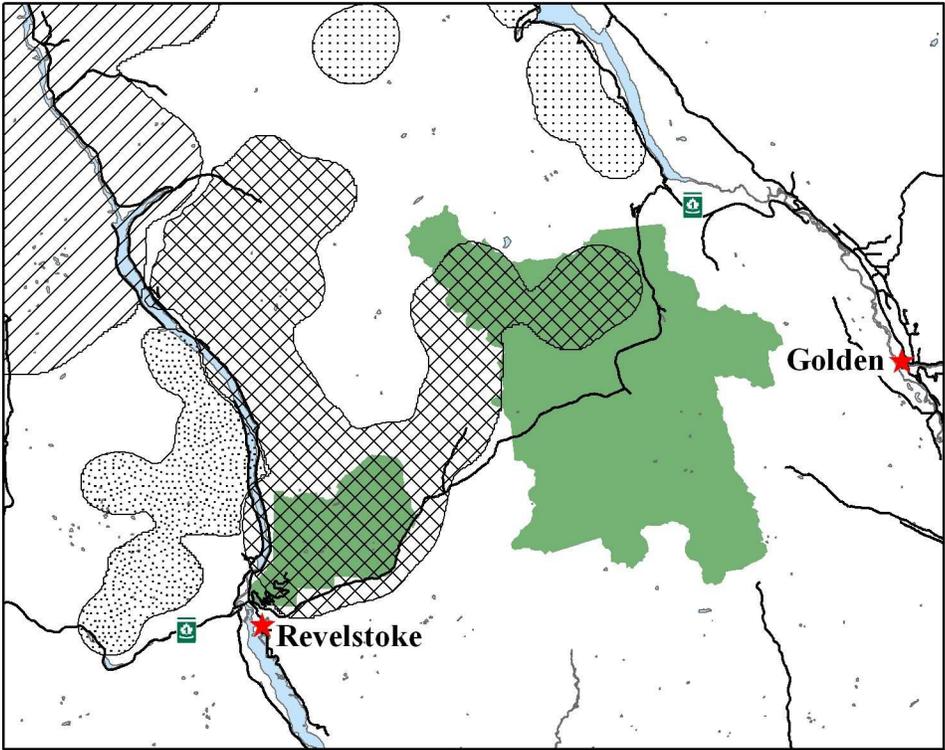
- Prepare and implement a conservation strategy for Woodland caribou in national parks.
- The strategy will outline conservation recovery actions that are determined through scientific, stakeholder and aboriginal advice – actions that will have the greatest chance of recovering and maintaining caribou populations on national park lands.
- Incorporate content from the conservation strategy into the Environment Canada-led SARA national recovery strategy and action plan(s).



Caribou range boundaries in and around Jasper National Park.



Caribou use areas in Banff National Park.



Caribou range boundaries in and around Mount Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks. Different shading patterns represent different herds.