



Porcupine Caribou Herd Strategic Framework 2012-13 to 2014-15



Introduction

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board (Board) developed this strategic framework that sets the course of the organization in the near future. This Strategic Framework spans three years to allow for alignment with the first five-year review of the Implementation Plan — a companion document to the *Harvest Management Plan for the Porcupine Caribou Herd in Canada* (HMP). After the three years and the first five-year review of the HMP, it is the intention for Strategic Framework to span five years. The Strategic Framework is a platform to ensure the Board is prioritizing appropriate tasks and that those activities are rooted in the Board's mandate, focused on its long-term objectives and aligned with identified priorities of relevant organizations and Parties. The success of this Strategic Framework relies upon continued support and participation of partner organizations and Parties.

Background

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board is a co-management board for the Canadian portion of the herd's range, formed under *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement, 1985* (PCMA). The Board is an advisory body comprised of representatives of the eight Parties to the PCMA, a Chair and an Executive Director. The territorial and federal government ministers retain their ultimate regulatory authorities. The Board holds three or four meetings per year, usually in one of the Porcupine Caribou User Communities.

Canada and the United States of America co-manage the herd under the *Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd (1987)*. The International Porcupine Caribou Board (IPCB) is comprised of Canadian and American representatives. The international agreement also provided for the formation of a joint technical committee to coordinate research and monitoring activities and advise the IPCB on scientific matters surrounding the herd. This committee, known as the "Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee" (PCTC) has been functioning since the 1970s. Over time, the PCTC has taken on the role of advising the Canadian Porcupine Caribou Management Board as well as the IPCB.

During its 25 years of operation, numerous changes have taken place and the Board has adapted to the environment in which it operates. However, the PCMA has not been amended. For example, since the PCMA was signed, all aboriginal user groups throughout the herd's range in Canada finalized land claim agreements, creating new authorities and responsibilities which, in turn, affect Board operations. This framework reflects the Parties' and the Board's understanding of the Board's mandate and how the Board should operate in this new environment.

This framework includes some background on the Board's history, objectives, and mandate. However, the bulk of this plan consists of summarized key activities that the Board would like addressed in the near future. This will guide the Board's annual activities and budgets; therefore, this framework also includes a work plan.

This framework contains very few actions related to caribou harvest. Most harvest management issues are covered in the HMP. This plan may be downloaded from the Board's website at www.taiga.net/pcmb. Implementation of the HMP will continue to be a priority for the Board; however, there are numerous other issues that also require the Board's attention.

This framework is meant to be a working document for the Board and the Parties to the PCMA. It is assumed that the readers are very familiar with the issues and they will use this document frequently to set their own work plans. There are two main sections to the framework. The first section is an Activity section listing all concerns that were compiled by reviewing past herd management plans, suggestions from the Parties and suggestions from the Board members. The second section is a prioritized list of activities that form the Board's work plan. Information is provided on each priority and their associated actions and performance measures. This priority rating does not preclude work on other concerns that were not identified or listed as priorities.

This is an adaptive Strategic Framework. While the Board has listed concerns to address over the next three years, surely there will be issues that arise that were not anticipated during the development of this framework. To accommodate this, the Board intends to do an annual review of major accomplishments and adjust the work plan as needed, with a full redraft of this framework in three years.

Objectives of the Parties

From section B of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (1985)*:

1. To co-operatively manage, as a herd, the Porcupine Caribou and its habitat within Canada so as to ensure the conservation of the Herd with a view to providing for the ongoing subsistence needs of native users;
2. To provide for participation of native users in Porcupine Caribou Herd management;
3. To recognize and protect certain priority harvesting rights in the Porcupine Caribou Herd for native users, while acknowledging that other users may also share the harvest;
4. To acknowledge the rights of native users as set out in this Agreement; and
5. To improve communications between Governments, native users and others with regard to the management of the Porcupine Caribou Herd within Canada.

Mandate of the PCMB

From sections D and E of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (1985)* the Board has a variety of duties and responsibilities. In summary, the Board:

- A. Shall improve communications with native users, governments and other users and increase involvement in studies and management in order to assist in coordinated management and conservation of Porcupine Caribou and its habitat, and may make recommendations on guidelines and training necessary for native users to participate in management.
- B. Shall review relevant scientific [and traditional] information on the conservation management of the herd and its habitat, and may make recommendations to the Minister on policy, legislation and regulations regarding:
 - management strategies,
 - further research where there appears to be a need, including recommendations on methods of data collection and presentation,
 - a herd management plan, and
 - a predator management plan.
- C. May make recommendations on land use planning and land management related to specific projects, plans or activities throughout the Canadian range which may affect caribou movements, behaviour, habitat, reduce caribou productivity, or affect interactions between native users and Porcupine Caribou.
- D. May identify sensitive [caribou] habitat areas requiring special protection and recommend measures to protect such areas.
- E. Shall maintain a list of eligible native users for each native user community and up-to-date information on the sub-allocation of the native user allocation among communities all of which shall be made available to Governments for management purposes.

Activities

The following is the complete list of activities that were identified and grouped under mandate topic. These were then prioritized by the Board and are further described in the next section. The priority activities form the Board's work plan over the coming year. This complete list of activities was included in the Strategic Framework to ensure they are not forgotten.

- A *The Board shall improve communications with native users, governments and other users and increase involvement in studies and management in order to assist in coordinated management and conservation of Porcupine Caribou and its habitat, and may make recommendations on guidelines and training necessary for native users to participate in management*

- A.1 Promote communication among the Parties:
 - A.1.1 Update and implement the Board annual communication plan;
 - A.1.2 Work with the aboriginal Parties to develop a definition of traditional knowledge and procedures for identifying traditional knowledge;
 - A.1.3 Incorporate available local and traditional knowledge in decision making; and
 - A.1.4 Ensure ongoing communication with the International Porcupine Caribou Board.

- A.2 Promote youth education in the renewable resources field:
 - A.2.1 Continue to make the Johnny Charlie scholarship (summer student) available to Parties; and
 - A.2.2 Revise the Porcupine Caribou Schools Program.

- A.3 Promote hunter education:
 - A.3.1 Work with Parties to finalize and implement the Porcupine Caribou Herd (PCH) hunter education program; and
 - A.3.2 Work with the Parties to address concerns related to grizzly bears attracted to caribou gut piles where there is a high concentration of hunters (e.g. near the Dempster Highway, Crow Mountain)

- A.4 Promote information exchange between scientists and communities:
 - A.4.1 Encourage scientists to report their results to communities;
 - A.4.2 Encourage the hiring of user community members for PCH field work;
 - A.4.3 Encourage scientists to attend cultural events when invited; and
 - A.4.4 Send users to gatherings concerning PCH and encourage presentations.

B The Board shall review relevant scientific information [and traditional knowledge] on the conservation management of the herd and its habitat, and may make recommendations to the Minister on policy, legislation and regulations regarding:

- *management strategies;*
- *further research where there appears to be a need, including recommendations on methods of data collection and presentation;*
- *a herd management plan; and*
- *a predator management plan.*

- B.1 Review and monitor harvest management:
 - B.1.1 Continue to implement the Harvest Management Plan and accompanying Implementation Plan;
 - B.1.2 Address inconsistencies between Yukon and NWT hunting regulations along the Dempster Highway;
 - B.1.3 Support continued management of hunting in the area of overlap between PCH and the Hart River Caribou Herd; and

B.1.4 If there is a caribou conservation concern (for example where harvest levels are limited in the Orange or Red Zones), discuss and consider recommendations related to predation during the Annual Harvest Meeting.

B.2 Review and monitor caribou research and monitoring:

B.2.1 Input, review and recommend the PCTC implement the one-year and five-year work plans;

B.2.2 Support and participate in the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op and use the results related to caribou and habitat to inform decision making; and

B.2.3 Support and participate in CARMA to further our understanding of caribou ecology and management and to exchange information with other organizations.

C The Board may make recommendations on land use planning and land management related to specific projects, plans or activities throughout the Canadian range which may affect caribou movements, behaviour, habitat, reduce caribou productivity, or affect interactions between native users and Porcupine Caribou.

C.1 Review and monitor tourism, industry and other human uses within the Canadian range

C.1.1 Continue to provide comments on Environmental Assessments and other permitting processes (such as Wilderness Tourism Licensing in Yukon or Tourism Operators Licensing in NWT), including mitigations for activities on or near sensitive caribou habitats;

C.1.2 Support and request the governments keep the Board updated on the implementation of completed regional land use plans that overlap with the Herd's range; contribute to new, relevant land use plans being developed; and

C.1.3 Support continued work on the Cumulative Effects project. Promote the use of the tools developed to ensure effective overall habitat and herd management.

D The Board may identify sensitive [caribou] habitat areas requiring special protection and recommend measures to protect such areas.

D.1 Continue to promote the use of the *Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* report, and *Summer Ecology of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* report for ongoing land use issues

D.1.1 Recommend that Parties update *Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* report; and

D.2 Recommend the PCTC review caribou habitat needs on the Yukon North Slope to identify and recommend conservation measures, including habitat protection measures, especially with regard to the protection of traditional calving, core calving and post-calving areas prior to any potential land management decisions, as appropriate.

E The Board shall maintain a list of eligible native users for each native user community and up-to-date information on the sub-allocation of the native user allocation among communities all of which shall be made available to Governments for management purposes.

E.1 The Board relies on the Parties to maintain lists of beneficiaries of the relevant land claim agreements and the sub-allocation will be managed under the HMP.

Board work plan 2012-13 to 2014-15

The following activities (in no particular order) are the priorities that the Board and the Parties will focus on in 2012-13 to 2014-15. Each activity is numbered as it was identified in the complete list of activities (see above).

Activity: (A.1.1) Update and implement the Board annual communication plan	
Background: The general Board communication plan needs to be aligned with the HMP communications plan and needs to be responsive to current priorities and issues facing herd management and conservation. Refer to the list of communication actions.	
Priority actions to take:	Performance measure:
1. Update the plan.	1. Review at the July 2013 meeting, specifically targeting hunters and youth.
2. Maintain a list of potential communication topics.	2. List has been maintained.
3. Review and update communications plan annually at the meeting following the Annual Harvest Meeting.	3. Communications plan has been reviewed and updated annually.

Activity: (A.3.1.) Finalize and implement the PCH hunter education program

Background: At the request of the Board, a working group has been drafting a package for a number of years. The initiative is led by the two territorial governments with input from several user groups. The current draft of the package includes components for in-class sessions, field sessions and possible participation in youth on-the-land camps hosted by communities.

The problem that the working group encountered is it's difficult to incorporate traditional knowledge and teachings into the package as requested by the Board. Traditional teachings vary between user groups and generally these teachings and beliefs are difficult to capture in writing.

It was decided at the June 2012 Board meeting that the traditional aspects should not be incorporated into the hunter education package, but rather should be delivered at hunter education events by the relevant First Nations/Inuvialuit.

Priority actions to take:

4. Finalize the hunter education package content as it is currently drafted by project leads.

Performance measure:

4. Draft to PCMB for review by November 2012.

5. Do any edits on content based on the community reviews, format the package and produce the various products recommended within the package.

5. Final products by 31 March 2013.

Activity: (A.3.2) Work with the Parties to help communication with users to reduce bear attractants (e.g. gut piles from Porcupine Caribou kills) near the Dempster Highway and Crow Mountain.

Background: Gut piles from Porcupine Caribou kills left along the Dempster Highway and other areas of high harvest appear to be attracting bears. Problems with people are created when bears and people come into contact more frequently. Bears are no longer just finding gut piles in the bush after the hunters leave, but are now approaching people looking for food. People feel that hunters, travellers and berry-pickers are now in danger. To make matters worse, some people are purposefully interacting with bears on the highway and doing dangerous things like enticing bears into the backs of pickups or shooting off bear bangers to make bears turn around. These human behaviours are changing bear behaviour, putting both people and bears at risk. Harvester behavior in particular needs to be changed to reduce the chance of dangerous bear-human interactions and to safeguard people and bears.

A working group including membership from the relevant management agencies and advisory bodies was formed to discuss this matter and explore potential resolutions to address the concerns. The working group proposed three general actions: develop communication materials, gather more information on the location and timing of occurrences, and conduct a bear hazard assessment. There is a potential role for the Board in communicating with caribou hunters to promote practices that reduce the probability of human-bear interactions.

Priority actions to take:

6. Help the working group develop and distribute communication materials.

Performance measure:

6. Materials distributed by 1 August 2012.

Activity: (B.1.1) Continue to implement the Harvest Management Plan and accompanying Implementation Plan	
Background: Refer to the HMP and IP for specific action items assigned to the Parties. The actions below are not listed in the HMP or IP and should also be done as priorities.	
Priority actions to take:	Performance measure:
7. Track the status of Board's and Parties action items related to the implementation of the HMP and review at the AHM.	7. HMP deadlines met each year.
8. Remind Parties to track their actions to ensure they meet their deadlines.	8. Reminder letters sent to Parties well in advance of annual deadlines.
9. Consider developing a PCMB and HMP calendar to track deadlines and milestones for PCH commitments and actions, as well as record harvest numbers.	9. Discussion at future Board meeting. If determined to be feasible, develop calendar by a specific date.
10. Assist with coordination of Parties' discussion regarding the Native User Agreements.	10. Meeting coordinated, facilitator engaged, assist with document outcomes.

Activity: (B.1.2) Address inconsistencies between Yukon and NWT hunting regulations along the Dempster Highway

Background: In 1998, the Board recommended three regulation changes to the Government of Yukon and the Government of the NWT concerning caribou hunting along the Dempster Highway. There were differences in how the regulations were implemented by the two territorial governments. Based on numerous community concerns repeatedly raised as well as a court challenge, the Yukon Government's regulations concerning the one-week closure and the 500-metre no-hunting corridor are no longer being enforced. However, the snowmachine restriction is still being enforced for licensed hunters only. In the NWT, GNWT did not implement the 500-metre no-hunting corridor based on feedback received during NWT consultations, and the one-week closure is only implemented based on recommendations from the Gwich'in Tribal Council. The motorized vehicle restriction has not been implemented in the NWT for the last two years. The HMP did not address hunting regulations on the Dempster and only provided recommended best practices.

The Parties are interested in harmonizing the regulations on both sides of the border, whether the regulations are supported and should continue, or the regulations are no longer supported and should be removed. The Board solicited comments from the Parties which were assembled at the 2012 Annual Harvest Meeting.

Priority actions to take:

11. Discuss potential options for facilitating harmonized regulations at the October 2012 PCMB meeting. Invite Director of Conservation Officer Services to this meeting to provide background.

Performance measure:

11. PCMB recommendation on achieving harmonized regulations determined by January 2013.

<p>Activity: (B.2.1) Recommend the PCTC implement the one-year and five-year work plans</p>	
<p>Background: The Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee (PCTC) has been operating since the 1970's. The formal relationship of the PCTC is with the IPCB, based on the international agreement; however, the Board also relies heavily on the work of the PCTC. Notably, the PCTC has significant responsibilities in the HMP.</p> <p>At their April 2012 meeting, the IPCB asked the PCTC to draft one-year and five-year work plans. IPCB will review and approve the work plans in September 2012. In order to ensure the PCTC work plan and the Strategic Framework are aligned, the Board has an interest in reviewing and providing input into the PCTC work plan annually.</p>	
<p>Priority actions to take:</p> <p>12. PCMB to write a letter to the IPCB listing relevant tasks that the Board considers priorities this year.</p>	<p>Performance measure:</p> <p>12. Letter sent by fall 2012.</p>
<p>13. PCMB to communicate with the IPCB to explore how the Board might provide input to the PCTC work plan, to ensure it includes studies of interest to the PCMB, and that the work plan includes the actions assigned to the PCTC under the HMP.</p>	<p>13. Same letter as above.</p>

<p>Activity: (C.1.3) Support continued work on the Cumulative Effects project. Promote the use of the tools developed to ensure effective overall habitat management across the Canadian range.</p>	
<p>Background: Project-by-project impact assessment and mitigation is not efficient or effective when making management decisions about the herd and its habitat. Potential future effects on the herd must be assessed in concert with all current and past activities within the range. Since no single agency or organization has taken responsibility for assessing and managing cumulative effects in the herd's range, the Board initiated a project in 2009 to conduct a cumulative effects assessment of human activities on the herd. Work to date has produced range-wide maps of human activities and vegetation. Consultant Don Russell plans to send Resource Selection Function (RSF) and climate analyses to the Board by July 2012.</p> <p>The Board is cognizant of its limited resources and scope of responsibility in this type of initiative and is assessing its continued role and the role of potential partners.</p>	
<p>Priority actions to take:</p> <p>14. Draft and distribute a plain language newsletter to inform the public on the project, progress to date, utility of products.</p>	<p>Performance measure:</p> <p>14. Draft the newsletter, with input from the consultant. Distribute newsletter to Parties and stakeholders by 30 September 2012.</p>
<p>15. Review products from Don Russell (RSF and climate analyses).</p>	<p>15. Discuss at October 2012 meeting.</p>
<p>16. Discuss the Board's continuing role and potential partners in this project.</p>	<p>16. October 2012 PCMB meeting.</p>
<p>17. If the Board decides to continue being involved in some aspect of the project, draft and distribute communication material to partners to inform on the project, progress to date, utility of products, and solicit partnerships.</p>	<p>17. Send letter to Parties in due course, if applicable.</p>

Activity: (D.1.1) Recommend Parties update the <i>Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou Herd</i> report	
Background: The <i>Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou Herd</i> report is used as important reference material to provide information regarding PCH sensitive habitats; however, it is increasingly becoming dated. Updating the information contained in the report will assist the Board and Parties to identify sensitive habitat areas requiring special protection and recommend measures to protect such areas.	
Priority actions to take: 18. Recommend Parties update the <i>Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou Herd</i> report.	Performance measure: 18. Letter sent to Parties, copied to PCTC and IPCB.

Reference materials

- PCMB Web site: <http://taiga.net/pcmb>
- Porcupine Caribou Herd Satellite Collar Project Web site: <http://taiga.net/satellite/index.html>
- *Harvest Management Plan for the Porcupine Caribou Herd in Canada* and its associated Implementation Plan
- PCMB Communication Plan
- PCTC work plans
- *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*
- *International Conservation Agreement – Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd*
- *Plan for the International Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd*
- *Sensitive Habitats of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* report