

## Boreal Woodland Caribou Conservation and Recovery in Manitoba

### Phase 1 - Manitoba/Canada Section 11 Conservation Agreement for Boreal Caribou

#### Project Overview

Boreal woodland caribou were listed as Threatened under Manitoba's Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act in April 2006 and under Canada's Species at Risk Act in June 2003. Boreal woodland caribou are a wide-ranging species that will require a landscape approach to the conservation and recovery of the species.

Manitoba is committed to conserving boreal woodland caribou. To facilitate positive conservation outcomes for caribou, Manitoba is taking steps that will lead to the implementation of management actions that will benefit caribou and their habitat. Manitoba's recovery strategy for boreal woodland caribou lays out a comprehensive plan that will help ensure the long-term persistence of boreal woodland caribou in the province. Specifically, Manitoba's strategy provides a recovery planning framework for the development and implementation of boreal woodland caribou range plans. Range plans will be written for individual management units and will reasonably accommodate human activity on the landscape while placing a priority on boreal caribou protection.

The goal of this broader project is to initiate and continue engagement with Industry, Indigenous Communities, ENGO's and Manitoban's as a whole about the conservation and recovery of boreal woodland caribou populations. Specifically, the purpose of the overall engagement project is to provide opportunities where information about boreal woodland caribou and boreal woodland caribou conservation efforts can be shared and to provide opportunities to receive input/feedback from interested audiences to shape boreal caribou management initiatives, as part of management unit range plan development, moving forward.

The Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada negotiated a boreal woodland caribou conservation agreement under Section 11 of the federal *Species at Risk Act* to strengthen the conservation of boreal caribou with a commitment to complete management unit range plans over three years. The agreement includes funding to support the conservation work within the agreement and engagement with Indigenous partners to ensure plans reflect their values and interests. Manitoba is committed to achieving self-sustaining boreal caribou populations, and this agreement will help to accomplish that outcome.

Phase 1 of the engagement provided an opportunity for interested audiences to provide feedback on the draft conservation agreement prior to Manitoba and Canada signing the agreement.

All comments received during phase 1 were reviewed and considered in the context of their relevance to the decision(s) to be made. Specifically, phase 1 feedback was reviewed and considered within the context of do they raise significant concern that would prevent Manitoba from moving forward with signing the Section 11 conservation agreement or can the concerns be adequately addressed through continued engagement as part of management unit range plan development.

## Engagement Overview

This project is a multi-year, multi-phase (2-3 years) engagement project on boreal woodland caribou management that is using EngageMB as one of multiple engagement tools to engage with various organizations (Industry, ENGO's), Indigenous communities and the general public on boreal caribou recovery planning.

Project Engagement Objectives:

- 1) To share information with interested audiences on the current state of boreal caribou populations, habitat and conservation initiatives across Manitoba.
- 2) To obtain public feedback on the value of boreal woodland caribou conservation in Manitoba.
- 3) To involve interested audiences to ensure a diversity of perspectives are considered in the development of boreal woodland caribou management unit range plans.

Phase 1 informed Manitobans about the government's intent to sign a Section 11 conservation agreement for boreal woodland caribou with Canada. Manitobans were invited to learn more about the Section 11 conservation agreement and to provide their perspectives on the importance of boreal caribou conservation and the central commitment in the agreement to complete boreal caribou range plans.

Phase 1 Engagement Objectives;

- 1) To provide interested audiences with information related to the negotiated Canada/Manitoba S.11 Boreal Woodland Caribou Conservation Agreement.
- 2) To obtain feedback from interested audiences on the importance of boreal caribou conservation and related conservation initiatives.

Engagement opportunities that were incorporated into phase one engagement included a meeting with industry representatives, letters sent to Indigenous Communities inviting them to participate in the Section 11 Conservation Agreement engagement, letters sent to Industry representatives inviting them to participate in the Section 11 Conservation Agreement engagement and creation of an EngageMB site for participation of the general public.

As part of the EngageMB site, individuals had opportunities to; 1) participate in a quick poll that sought perspectives on the importance of boreal caribou conservation, 2) provide ideas on how to achieve positive outcomes for boreal woodland caribou conservation, 3) provide comments/feedback on the Section 11 conservation agreement.

Phase 1 engagement for the public and Industry occurred over a 30-day period (May 6, 2022 – June 6, 2022). The Indigenous engagement opportunity occurred over a 45-day period (May 6, 2022 – June 21, 2022). Comments and feedback could be submitted through the EngageMB site or sent directly via email.



**30 days of online engagement for the general public, 45 days of open engagement for Indigenous peoples**



**264 Individuals visited the site on EngageMB**



**3 background documents provided**



**98 individuals participated in the Quick Poll**



**28 Individual (general public) written submissions**



**3 ideas were submitted**



**1 submission from an Indigenous Government, 3 submissions from Industry, 1 submission from an ENGO**



**1 online meeting held with Industry**

**1 meeting with an Indigenous Government**



**21 letters written to Industry Representatives and 64 letters written to Indigenous Communities**

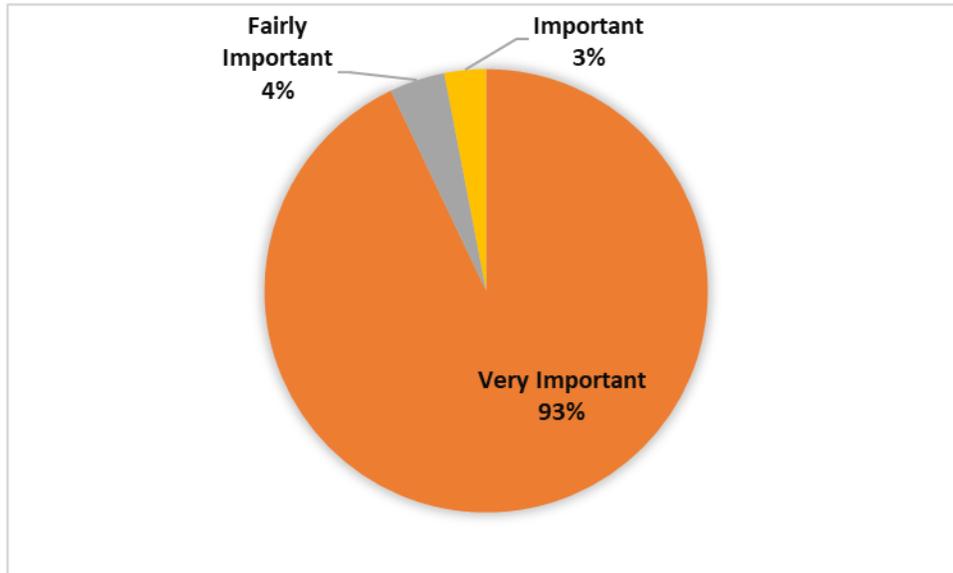
## What We Heard

Phase 1 of the engagement project (Manitoba/Canada Section 11 Conservation Agreement for Boreal Woodland Caribou) provided an opportunity to receive feedback on the agreement that presents the path forward that Manitoba and Canada intend to take to conserve boreal woodland caribou in Manitoba.

**Quick Poll Question: How important is recovery and conservation of boreal caribou to you?**

With respect to boreal caribou conservation and recovery efforts, we wanted to understand peoples attitudes on how important such efforts are to them and the importance of continuing the efforts. The response choices were, very important, fairly important, important, slightly important and not important at all.

Overwhelmingly, 97% of individual responses indicated that boreal caribou conservation and recovery efforts were either fairly important or very important.



**Ideas: We want your ideas on how we can achieve positive outcomes for boreal woodland caribou conservation in Manitoba.**

We wanted to provide an opportunity for individuals to provide some initial ideas that could be considered during the development of management unit range plans.

The common themes from the submitted ideas included:

- the importance of climate change to boreal caribou conservation and impacts to habitat.
- the importance of protecting large intact areas of caribou habitat.

**Idea #1** - It is important to factor in the likely consequences of climate change on caribou movements and vulnerability to disturbance. There is a reasonable expectation that fires will increase in intensity and frequency due to climate change. This may imply greater movement on the part of Caribou in the future to seek out optimal foraging habitat that may be more patchily distributed.

**Idea #2** - Create more wilderness parks; do not allow development and industry. Provide habitat for caribou preserve wild lands for future generations

**Idea #3** - Protecting large areas of caribou habitat is the only proven solution for caribou recovery. Restoring habitats is not proven to work.

## Individual Submissions

Individual submissions provided an opportunity for individuals to provide more detailed feedback either specifically for the section 11 conservation agreement or for boreal caribou conservation in general.

With respect to the 28 individual submissions, the majority of the submissions were a form response that could be altered as desired by the individual. The common themes were as follows;

- Protecting woodland caribou and their habitat is important
- The importance of establishing large scale, intact protected areas.
- Protecting caribou habitat has other benefits; mitigating impacts of climate change, cleaning our air and water, providing habitat for many other species.
- Resource extraction within caribou areas should not be allowed.
- Government needs to take strong action now to protect threatened caribou and their habitat.
- Government needs to urgently move forward with completing range plans.
- The importance of engaging and collaborating with indigenous peoples in the conservation of boreal caribou.

“Caribou need large, intact areas of wilderness to thrive. Large scale protected areas where Caribou still exist in MB are needed immediately. Resource extraction where Caribou still exist cannot be allowed to happen. It is widely accepted that Caribou will not stick around when forests are impacted by human activity, be it road building or resource extraction of any kind. The science required to make the right decisions is all there. Meaningful action must be taken now. Stop the foot-dragging and do the right thing, please.”

“Protecting the boreal forests where caribou thrive has many other benefits for Manitobans including: mitigating climate change, cleaning our air and water; and providing habitat for hundreds of other species.”

“Any decision must be reached in co-operation with, and with the direction of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis people.”

## **ENGO Submissions**

One submission was received from an ENGO. The themes presented were as follows;

- Concern over past missed opportunities/deadlines to complete boreal caribou action plans
- It is critical for range plans to be completed to prevent further boreal caribou population declines.
- Advocacy for large-scale intact habitat throughout boreal caribou range
- Need for large core areas where forestry will not occur
- Need for large protected areas where industrial activities and associated road networks are prohibited with carefully managed developments on the remaining landscape.
- Carbon-rich boreal forests/caribou habitats store large quantities of carbon. Protecting carbon stores would be a meaningful contribution to mitigating climate change.
- High importance of meeting the timelines for range plan development as outlined in the Section 11 Agreement.

“advocate for the recovery of this species through the protection of large-scale, intact habitats throughout their range in our province, along with the proper management of these areas”

“urge the Manitoba government to ensure that large protected areas are secured for recovery of threatened woodland caribou along with carefully managed developments on the remaining landscape.”

“The carbon-rich boreal forest caribou habitats also store huge quantities of carbon in trees and soils. Protecting these carbon stores would be a meaningful contribution from Manitoba to mitigating global climate change.”

“We further urge that the long overdue caribou action plans are complete within the timelines provided in the Section 11 Agreement.”

“we cannot afford any further delays if we wish to recover woodland caribou and their habitats for all people and boreal wildlife.”

## **Indigenous Submission**

One submission was received from an Indigenous Government. The themes presented were as follows;

- The importance of respectful engagement with Indigenous peoples
- The importance of meaningful dialogue with Indigenous peoples
- The importance of including indigenous peoples in all aspects of the range planning process and understanding their priorities.
- Transparency is key; Importance of sharing information

“It is critical that we begin a meaningful dialogue”

“A respectful process of consultation and engagement...”

## Industry Submissions

Three submissions were received from Industry. The common themes presented were as follows;

- Recognize the importance of well-structured conservation agreements that are developed in a provincial context for the conservation of boreal caribou.
- The importance of including Indigenous peoples and stakeholders in the range planning process.
- Supportive of the overarching principles of collaboration, results-focused, use of best available information, adaptive management, transparency, Indigenous engagement and stakeholder engagement.
- Recommendation that the conservation agreement adopt the provincial boreal caribou management units.
- The importance of meeting the committed timelines and allocating adequate resources to complete range plans.
- The importance of developing a dynamic habitat approach as part of range planning as is being implemented in other provinces.

“we are encouraged to see that the Federal and the Manitoba government are working collaboratively to seek effective conservation and recovery measures to support the conservation and recovery of Boreal Woodland Caribou populations in Manitoba.”

“we are supportive of the overarching principles of collaboration, results-focused, use of best available information, adaptive management, transparency, Indigenous Engagement, and Stakeholder Engagement – which are well aligned with Manitoba's forest management planning framework.”

“Given that this agreement will set the stage for conservation and recovery actions in Manitoba over the next 3-50+ years, we recommend that the conservation agreement adopt the Provincial Management Units (based on the best available information). “

“We recommend that the Manitoba government investigate the dynamic habitat approach being implemented in other provinces and assess the applicability within Manitoba.”

“To support the conservation and recovery of local Boreal Woodland Caribou that is consistent with the population and distribution objectives and critical habitat outcomes in the Federal Recovery Strategy and aligned with the Manitoba Recovery Strategy, significant resources will need to be allocated to ensure a successful implementation that reflects meaningful engagement with interested First Nations communities, and stakeholders.”

## Industry Meeting Feedback

On November 4, 2021, a meeting was held with Industry representatives. Twenty-two industry representatives participated in the meeting. Industries represented included mining, forestry and energy. The common themes heard during the meeting were as follows;

- The importance of certainty and meeting timelines as various planning processes unfold.
- The importance of filling knowledge gaps, in a timely manner, for boreal caribou management units where information is lacking (i.e. Kamachawie Management Unit).
- The importance of engaging Indigenous peoples in range planning processes and gaining their perspectives on priority conservation approaches/measures.
- The importance of engaging industry in the range planning process.
- The importance of long-term planning to include habitat restoration to reduce the cumulative effects of development on boreal caribou habitat.
- The important of implementing monitoring to ensure mitigation efforts are effective.
- The importance of learning from neighbouring provinces that could help guide efforts in Manitoba.

## Next Steps

Comments/feedback received, will be considered within the context of do they raise significant concern that would prevent Manitoba from moving forward with signing the Section 11 conservation agreement, or can the concerns be adequately addressed through continued engagement as part of management unit range plan development. Within the next 30 days, a final decision will be made regarding moving forward with signing the agreement.

Fish and Wildlife Branch will continue to move forward with implementing an engagement plan to engage with Indigenous Peoples, Industry and ENGO's and the general public as part of the development of management unit range plans. The intent is to invite representatives to participate the planning process to share information and to learn about the various priorities that each audience has regarding boreal caribou conservation.

## Active Offer Statement

This information is available in an alternate format on request. Please contact [wildlife@gov.mb.ca](mailto:wildlife@gov.mb.ca)

## Questions?

If you have questions or comments, please contact the Dennis Brannen, Caribou Biologist, Wildlife Branch at [dennis.brannen@gov.mb.ca](mailto:dennis.brannen@gov.mb.ca).