

## Idaho Conservation League – Caribou habitat rule Q & A

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### How unique are woodland caribou?

It is important to note that “woodland” or “mountain” caribou are a distinct subspecies that differ from the large, iconic caribou herds that inhabit the tundra. The status of the woodland caribou is summarized on page 10 of the latest Fish and Wildlife Service Status Review (2008). The total population of woodland caribou throughout its geographic range is thought to be less than 2,000 individuals:

Their range has declined by approximately 43% in BC, and some estimates indicate a 60% decline when considering the combined BC and US historic distribution (MCTAC 2002). ***Overall numbers decreased from approximately 2,300 animals in the mid-1990s to approximately 1,939 animals in 2008*** (Seip 2008a). Currently, the entire global population of mountain caribou occurs within BC, Idaho, and Washington, where they are considered to be at risk of extirpation.

(Emphasis added).

### How many caribou are there in the South Selkirk herd?

The Final Rule provides a brief summary of the status of the South Selkirk Mountains herd (Pages 16 and 17):

The number of woodland caribou detected in the United States has continued to dwindle, and annual census surveys continue to find the bulk of the remaining population occupying habitats in British Columbia. ***The most recent census information demonstrates a decline from 46 caribou in 2009 to 27 animals in 2012***, although the cause of this decline has not been described (Degroot and Wakkinen 2012, p.2). The 2011 survey documented zero caribou in the United States, and the 2012 survey documented 4 caribou on Little Snowy Top Mountain, Idaho.

(Emphasis added).

## **Does the habitat designation meet the needs of caribou?**

The final rule designates the habitat that was occupied when caribou were listed as endangered in 1983. Unfortunately, this represents that habitat used by an imperiled herd rather than a recovered herd. *More habitat must be protected to have a growing herd and achieve recovery.*

## **What else should be done to recover woodland caribou?**

The habitat designation alone will not lead to the recovery of caribou. The most recent recovery plan for woodland caribou dates back to 1994. *Since the recovery plan is outdated, the Fish and Wildlife Service should develop an updated recovery plan.*

*Sources available upon request.*