Location: MS Teams Meeting
Date: Weds, Feb 28, 2023
Time: 1200-1330 h Pacific

RCCSCTWG- translocation and process discussion

ATTENDEES:

Bruno Delesalle
Cailyn Glasser
Caroline Feischl
Lindsay Keller (Centre for Dialogue)
Chris Joseph
Colin Bergeron
Dave Nordquist
Leo DeGroot
Bevan Ernst
Christine Friedrichsmeier
Genevieve Lachance
Marlene Machmer
Nikki Heim
Rhiannon Kirton
Robert Daum (Centre for Dialogue)
Leah Philips
Tina Donald
Kathi Zimmerman

SUMMARY

Parks Canada, Indigenous communities/organizations, and the Province of BC Caribou Recovery Program met to discuss the possibility of translocating a lone, 9-year-old, female caribou in the South Selkirks herd range. Everyone agreed that it is a complex decision, and not one easily made. Parks Canada had put forward a plan earlier in the week for the caribou's translocation to Columbia North.

The options discussed by the group were:

1. No action: leave her where she is
2. Soft release: move her to the maternity pen in the Central Selkirks
3. Hard release: move her to Columbia North

- Bruno, from Parks Canada, gave the group the background on need for a quick decision and how it had come about.
- The group discussed the three options, as well as risks associated with the extirpation of the Columbia South herd.
- The group also discussed the benefits to the individual animal versus the benefit to the genetics of the Columbia North and Columbia South herds (should caribou move back into the herd range).

- The Nations noted the concern over the legal liabilities of extirpating the Columbia South herd with respect to extinguishing the Nations' rights.
- They also expressed concern that if the Columbia South herd was extirpated, that the area would become open to further industrial development and increased disturbance from recreation such as skiing and snowmobiling, noting that once the permits are given, they are unlikely to be taken back if caribou are reintroduced.

No consensus recommendation or decision was made at this meeting. There will be further meetings to address the gaps in information that the Nations need to make their recommendation.

NOTES (dialogue as it occurred):

1. Genevieve introduced the purpose of this meeting
2. Round of introductions
3. Bruno Delesalle:
    a. This lone female caribou has been moving around a lot, several times near the Trans Canada Hwy.
    b. Miller Lake now at higher elevations
    c. Worried about her vicinity to avalanche control
    d. Parks Canada proposed that Columbia North seems the best option – stable, increasing population, good quality ecosystem/habitat – similar to what she's used to (Option #3)
    e. Key mitigations:
        i. Food
        ii. If the weather impedes her translocation, then she would be moved to the mat pen (Option #2)
    f. Difficult discussion
    g. March 21-22-23 for mat pen capture. Use one qualified helicopter company (Bighorn Helicopters)
    h. Focus on Columbia North instead of Central Selkirks – only 28 animals and a decreasing trend in Central Selkirks, different landscape, higher risk of predation in Central Selkirks
    i. Discussed with the Parks vet (Brian) who prefers option #3
    j. Option #1 is no action; she stays where she is
4. Leo
    a. BC does not have a position on where she should be translocated, however Leo's preference would be the Central Selkirks, but the important point is what the Nations input is.
5. Kathi

a. Decision path is very complex. Based on science and what is best for the caribou – both the individual and the recipient herd.

b. Habitat solutions is an important conversation, and a lot of progress has been made

c. We would love to have a lot more time to make decisions, but we don't in this case

6. Caroline

a. Goal of this meeting? When does the decision need to be made? What's the process?

b. Genevieve – the process can be undertaken in a different meeting, unless we come to a decision today, but probably next week. Decision needs to be made the week before March 21st.

7. Tina

a. Would like more discussion

b. What is the legal liability of the extirpation of the herd

i. Bruno – permitting is underway; everything is identified in the permit (permits)

ii. Cailyn – legal liability with FN involvement – extinguishment of a right, etc. Cailyn can bring to legal subgroup. It is definitely a concern.

c. Want to be part of the process in moving the animal, if that's the decision

8. Marlene

a. Implications of herd extirpation on habitat protections, permits for industry and recreation. More pressure on Ktunaxa to approve permits. Assurances needed that it will have no influence on the ability of caribou to recover.

i. Bruno – from Parks perspective – planning includes conservation corridors in and out of the Park. There is a benefit to Columbia North for the lone female to be translocated there. When we reintroduce caribou to Columbia South, animals need to be able to move around, live there. Need to ensure there is suitable habitat.

ii. Leo – is BC going to maintain habitat protections in extirpated herd areas? There have been so far, but no decision has been made yet. Central Selkirks will need translocations, but Columbia South can repopulate naturally, so protections will be kept in place.

iii. Kathi – recreation disturbance would not be a risk while there are no caribou there.

iv. Marlene – Ktunaxa very concerned with disturbance – hard to reverse, even with reintroduction. Need to have a moratorium of NEW roads, new recreation, or industrial tenures. People will be attached to their recreation areas, and they will be hard to repeal.

v. Leo – with GAR orders, no industry changes. But recreation/snowmobiling has been allowed. We need to consider human behaviour and consider Marlene's point. Snowmobilers have been going there anyway.

vi. Marlene – there are other animals that were benefitting from the caribou closures and are now being affected.

vii. Leo – excellent point. Need to extend the closures beyond caribou.

viii. Colin

1. Protect habitat and protect individuals. But will allow skiing in Park if she's gone, but no sledding in the Park

2. This lone individual will be gone, and the herd extirpated within a year, likely, anyway. So, we need to make the choice knowing that

b. What is the risk of predation for different herds? A risk-rating?

i. Leo - wolf and cougar removal is happening, so the predator population should be low. Central Selkirks has some more agriculture (deer, elk – alternate prey). No hard data that shows predation risk between the areas

ii. Bruno - dealing with a totally different landscape in the south, with more fragmentation and more predators. Need to expand the planning timelines

1. Leo – just as much fragmentation in Col N (private land at valey bottom too); Central Selkirks has more protected habitat. Central Selkirks could be impacted by climate change sooner

2. Kathi – predation pressure has a higher impact in small herds vs large ones. Predation pressure shouldn't be a consideration, given the predator control

iii. Rhiannon – disagrees with the assumption that the herd will be extirpated if we leave her. Also, are we setting a precedent for quick, non-thorough decision-making?

iv. Rhiannon – the rationale keeps changing in what seems to be the highest priority factors. Have you seen the data? Or, this is just opinion? And what about the habitat assertions of it being more fragmented more in Col N, or not (compared to Central Selkirks). Has an issue with opinion vs data.

1. Bruno – our timeframe.. we didn't think about translocating 2 years ago; this process started late November because of her movements. If she was in Glacier NP we may not be having this conversation. We did very quick analysis – including her low elevation movements. Went through a process to scope options with what the knowns are, plus subject matter experts. Have not had the time to do a full analysis and table it. This is an urgent matter and felt they should act.

2. Not playing a game. A lot of data was presented, and opinions based on those data. Yes, there are differences in opinion based on the data.

3. Can the data be provided to the group? Yes, from BC, Parks and Rob. Based on caribou census. Clear in population and trend for both herd areas. The census data was what the experts were working with.

4. Kathi – Aaron sent around the census information for this year. But they counted 21 individuals for Central Selkirks and will try to do it again due to visibility challenges.

c. Nikki

   i. Question is "should she be moved"? What are the ramifications to the herd being extirpated? Legalities to FN – would like to have someone on the call to address.

d. Genevieve - if there were assurances of habitat protection, rec closures, etc. What would you recommend?

   i. Marlene – still need to know predation pressure, etc.

      1. Cailyn can provide her team to the next Indigenous subcommittee meeting for March 13th

e. Caroline

   i. Non-biased list of options and pros and cons of each, better than the table presented yesterday.

f. Genevieve – will send out notes from both meetings, to have a summary/record of what was . discussed

   i. Will try to identify the gaps in information presented before March 6th, and before March 13th

g. Marlene – forestry transfer, FSP – Louisiana Pacific. Nothing is changing. And uncertainty with Columbia North translocation

   i. Colin – Glacier NP sent a letter (feedback) with strong concern for caribou habitat and listed species not included in the FSP. Asked for meeting with foresters.

      1. So did Marlene/Ktunaxa. Received NO assurances.

h. Colin – may lose options if we make the decision a week before the proposed translocation

i. Rhiannon – appreciate the concern but rushing FN – need to understand legal implications. It's beyond the one caribou.

j. Chris

   i. Agrees with Marlene's comments for Ktunaxa

k. Concluded at 1322k PST