



File: 97250-20/19079

April 8, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Dear Participants:

Re: Complaint File 19079 – Harvesting in Caribou Migration Corridor in the Anzac Drainage

On November 28, 2019, the Forest Practices Board received a complaint from a Prince George resident that Canadian Forest Products Ltd. (Canfor) is harvesting within a caribou corridor in the Anzac drainage. This is the Board's report on the complaint.

Background

On December 9, 2009, the Ministry of Environment signed an Ungulate Winter Range Order U-7-003 (Order) for mountain caribou in the Upper Fraser, Hart Ranges and Mount Robson Planning Units, which includes the Anzac drainage. The purpose of the Order is to facilitate the survival of mountain caribou, a red listed¹ species, as it is important to ensure that forest planning consider the impact of proposed development on caribou.

The Order protects winter habitat areas for mountain caribou and also provides for connectivity corridors between them. There are two caribou corridors in the Anzac drainage. Harvesting is permitted within the corridors, subject to restrictions identified in the Order. The complainant was not aware that harvesting is permitted within a caribou corridor.

¹ Any species or ecosystem that is at risk of being lost (extirpated, endangered or threatened).

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/conservation-data-centre/explore-cdc-data/red-blue-yellow-lists>

The Order

The Order specifies general wildlife measures (GWMs) that apply within the winter habitat areas, and GWMs that apply within the caribou corridors. The purpose of the GWMs for the caribou corridors is to maintain landscape connectivity while allowing for some forest development. The Order specifies requirements for forest cover based on age, green-up and wind-firmness. The GWMs require that after harvesting:

1. a minimum of 20 percent of the forest within each caribou corridor must be greater than 100 years of age in a contiguous, windfirm corridor, and
2. no more than 20 percent of the productive forest area of each caribou corridor can be less than 3 metre green-up condition at any time.

Canfor's harvesting under the Order

Before it applied for a cutting permit, Canfor conducted an analysis of the vegetation inventory and proposed development to determine if it would achieve the GWMs when operating in caribou corridors. Canfor's analysis of the two corridors in the Anzac drainage showed that harvesting of the proposed cutblocks would be consistent with the GWMs. However, an analysis is only one tool used when planning forestry activities.

Forest professionals are responsible for prescribing forest activities that foster good stewardship and to practice only in those fields where they are professionally competent. Forest professionals utilize other qualified professionals when prescribing management strategies for resource value outside their field of expertise. Qualified professionals should be prescribing sound forest practices that address both statutory requirements in the Order and non-statutory expectations such as maintaining the function of the caribou corridor. Proper functioning of the caribou corridor should not be assumed simply because an analysis confirmed the GWMs will be met.

Canfor told the Board that a professional biologist provided guidance to Canfor foresters on general management strategies and guidelines for caribou in the Prince George area. Canfor incorporated this guidance when planning development in the two caribou corridors. The Anzac development included spatially identifying internal corridors within the caribou corridor with the intent that they would remain in Canfor's database as a long-term contiguous wind-firm corridor.

Each caribou corridor area has unique attributes that may require specific strategies to ensure that characteristics required for caribou to use the corridor are retained. The strategies are usually developed by using a qualified professional to assess how the proposed development would affect caribou use. In this case, a qualified professional did not specifically review the development in the Anzac caribou corridors. However, Canfor has agreed to review future development proposals within caribou corridors and specifically the spatial corridor designs with a qualified professional.

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Conclusions

The Board determined that Canfor's development in the Anzac caribou corridors is consistent with the GWMs. Canfor assessed the proposed development in the caribou corridors to ensure it met the GWMs by conducting an analysis. The analysis confirmed that Canfor would meet its legal obligations. In addition, the development in the caribou corridors incorporated the general guidance provided by a professional biologist and it incorporated permanent internal corridors. However, planning could be improved by involving a qualified professional to assess how proposed development will affect the function of the caribou corridor. Canfor has agreed that a qualified professional will review future development in designated caribou corridors.

I understand that the complainant had not discussed this concern with Canfor before submitting this complaint to the Board. However, both parties have since agreed that discussing forestry activities in the Anzac drainage with each other is important. I encourage the complainant and Canfor to keep an open dialogue with a view to better understanding each other.

This concludes the Board's involvement in this file. If you have any remaining questions or concerns, please contact Cameron Leitch, RPF at (250) 213-4728.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kriese', followed by a horizontal line.

Kevin Kriese
Chair
Forest Practices Board

Cc John Huybers, District Manager
Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister