

Habitat Restoration for Woodland Caribou

Roads and Trails in the Provincial Forest



Woodland caribou populations are declining in parts of their range due to habitat disturbances that affect old-growth coniferous forests and peatlands (also known as muskeg). Habitat restoration is one strategy in Saskatchewan's caribou range plans to improve habitat over the long term.

Why is road and trail restoration important?

There is a widespread network of roads, trails and seismic lines (together known as linear features) in the southern provincial forest resulting from decades of forest harvest and other land use activities. This area overlaps with the SK2 (Boreal Plain) caribou conservation unit.

Roads and trails split woodland caribou habitat into smaller, disconnected patches that make it more difficult for caribou to find food and avoid predators. Though predation is a natural source of mortality, roads and trails also make it easier for predators like wolves and bears to travel, and more likely they will find and kill caribou. Higher levels of human activity and noise associated with roads and trails can also disrupt caribou behaviour and reduce calf survival.

Restoring habitat on roads and trails benefits more than just woodland caribou. Restoration actions, such as planting trees, create larger and better connected forest and peatland habitats. Fewer roads and trails on the landscape will improve conditions for caribou, moose and other wildlife. The Ministry of Environment will look for opportunities to consolidate land user access in restoration project areas to decrease overall habitat disturbance.

Current



Under Restoration



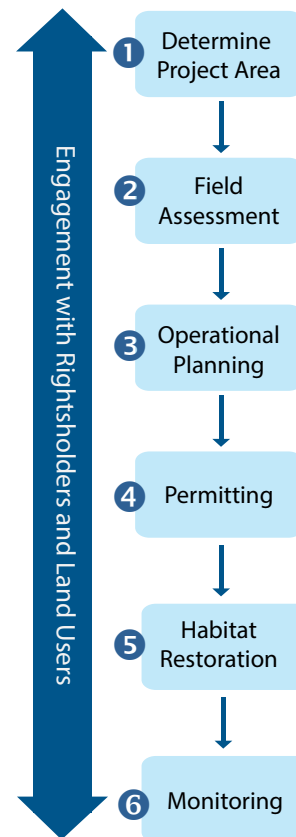
Future



How will the government carry out habitat restoration projects?

The Ministry of Environment will work with Rightsholders and land users to ensure restoration activities are successful. This includes engagement to understand current and future land uses in priority areas.

- 1 Project areas** are determined using caribou habitat value and disturbance mapping, and through engagement with Rightsholders and land users. Projects will proceed when funding is confirmed.
- 2 Field assessment** confirms the condition of roads and trails and possible habitat restoration actions.
- 3 Operational planning** develops a practical action plan to restore roads and trails and considers input on current and future land uses.
- 4 Permitting** of restoration actions (e.g. tree planting) is completed by the ministry after a review of the proposed project. Duty to Consult with Rightsholders may be triggered during permitting.
- 5 Restoration** is completed by tree planting and other actions described in the operational plan.
- 6 Monitoring** keeps track of how restored features are changing and improving habitat over time.



The ministry will focus **habitat restoration activities on legacy roads, trails and seismic lines**. These features were created by industry or other land users before current reclamation or restoration requirements came into effect. Carrying out restoration activities where these disturbances are not naturally recovering will improve wildlife habitat and speed up forest regeneration.



For more information, contact us at woodlandcaribouproject@gov.sk.ca