

2025 Woodland Caribou Program Update

It was another busy year for the Government of Saskatchewan's Woodland Caribou Program. Highlights include finalizing the SK2 East Range Plan, advancing the SK1 Range Plan, conducting field work to support the SK2 West habitat restoration pilot project, developing a draft boreal habitat offset policy and calculator, and publishing new mitigation guidelines for the mineral and seismic exploration sectors operating in SK2 (Boreal Plain). To support habitat restoration activities in woodland caribou range, Saskatchewan entered into a seven-year funding agreement with Natural Resources Canada under the federal 2 Billion Trees program. Saskatchewan continues to correspond with Environment and Climate Change Canada regarding establishing a new section 11 agreement for woodland caribou.

Read ahead for more information about our 2025 activities:

Range Planning and Engagement

- The Woodland Caribou Range Plan for SK2 East was finalized in October 2025, marking an important milestone in Saskatchewan's Woodland Caribou Program. The range plan identifies objectives for different areas and outlines key management actions including maintaining important habitats, mitigation strategies to reduce impacts on caribou and habitat, and prioritizing areas for habitat restoration. Range plans have now been completed for the entire SK2 (Boreal Plain) caribou conservation unit.
- The SK1 (Boreal Shield) range planning process continued in 2025, hosting working group meetings and a planning table meeting in September and November, respectively. A technical session was also held in December, focusing on SK1 land-use scenarios. Thank you for your continued participation and input!
- The 2025 wildfire season affected large parts of the SK1 and SK2 caribou conservation units. Ministry staff are evaluating habitat impacts in SK2 Central, in anticipation of reviewing and refining the SK2 Central Range Plan in future years.
- The Ministry of Environment, together with Ya'thi Néné Lands & Resources (YNLR) held the first SK1 Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) workshop with Athabasca Basin communities. The workshop was held in February 2025 in Black Lake. The SK1 ILK project is gathering Indigenous and local knowledge about woodland caribou to inform the SK1 range range plan. Thank you to YNLR for helping to organize this event!
- The programs' bi-annual newsletter, "The Hoof Print", continued again this year, with two editions published and shared with stakeholders and Rightsholders. The newsletters provide regular updates on initiatives and projects.

Population and Health Monitoring

- Woodland caribou fecal pellet collections were completed for central SK2 West and the southern portion of SK2 East to update population assessments for these areas.
- Caribou health monitoring continues to be a priority for Saskatchewan. The Woodland Caribou Program supports work to evaluate the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) by cost-sharing testing of deer, moose and elk with the CWD surveillance program in Wildlife Management Zones within and adjacent to woodland caribou range.



2025 Woodland Caribou Program Update

Mitigation, Habitat Management and Restoration

- New woodland caribou-focused mitigation measures and guidelines were published for mineral and seismic exploration sector proponents operating in the Boreal Plain (SK2) caribou conservation unit. The mitigation measures and guidelines provide standard approaches to avoiding and minimizing potential project impacts to woodland caribou and their habitat. The guidelines also support the development of alternative (non-standard) mitigation approaches and plans.
- A draft habitat offset policy for woodland caribou range in Saskatchewan was developed with input from the provincial Habitat Advisory Committee, industry stakeholders and northern Indigenous groups. The policy aims to compensate for the long-term residual impacts of major developments in caribou range by delivering habitat improvements elsewhere. It is supported by an offset calculator and technical manual, as well as a new offset account within the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund that will be used to fund caribou habitat restoration actions.
- The SK2 West habitat restoration pilot project, south of the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range, was substantially advanced in 2025. Field work gathered necessary information to develop an operational restoration plan, defining areas for habitat restoration treatment and outlining appropriate habitat restoration actions while taking into account land user requirements. Engagement with stakeholders and Rightsholders occurred in fall 2025 and is ongoing.
- In March 2025 the Ministry entered into a 7-year, \$10 million funding agreement with Natural Resources Canada to carry out habitat restoration activities in woodland caribou range. This funding, provided through the habitat restoration stream of the federal 2 Billion Trees program, is being used to restore legacy linear features (roads, trails and seismic lines) and potentially other disturbances, while considering ongoing land use and economic activities. Caribou habitat affected by repeated wildfire disturbance is also being considered for restoration. 2 Billion Trees funding is supporting the SK2 West habitat restoration pilot project and will be used to fund future restoration activities in other areas.

Have any questions or comments about the Woodland Caribou program? Contact us at woodlandcaribouproject@gov.sk.ca or visit our webpage at saskatchewan.ca/woodland-caribou.

Report a caribou sighting to the Saskatchewan Data Conservation Center at <https://biodiversity.sk.ca/reportcaribou.htm>.

