

Workshop: Conserving woodland caribou in the managed forest

A workshop was held August 19 to foster discussion and debate on issues related to conservation of woodland caribou in the managed forest. Six panellists were invited to make brief presentations on their points of view on this subject. They were Don Thomas (Canadian Wildlife Service); Hartley Multimaki (Buchanan Forest Products); Colin Edey (NOVA Corporation); Jerry English (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources - retired); Dale Seip (British Columbia Ministry of Forests) and Harold Cumming (Lakehead University - retired).

Following some questions and discussion with members of the audience, a "mini-debate" was set up between Don Thomas and Dale Seip to discuss in more detail the roles of the coarse vs. fine filter approaches in dealing with woodland caribou. The coarse filter implies a focus on protecting natural processes and other attributes of the whole ecosystem as a means of achieving a range of conservation goals. The fine filter approach focuses on managing individual species or addressing specific environmental concerns. There had initially been an intent to run several such debates, and to invite audience participation in them, but this plan was altered due to time constraints and substantial agreement among the panellists regarding most points.

The main points emerging from the workshop were summarized as:

1. Caribou should be conserved. (This may seem obvious, but it should not be assumed that everyone will always agree with this.)
 2. The focus of caribou conservation efforts should be on maintaining or managing habitat. (Primarily, this will mean maintaining the integrity of the habitat to support caribou.)
 3. An ecosystem or landscape approach should be adopted, as a backdrop for conserving caribou, and also for conserving the full range of biodiversity on the landscape.
 4. There will always be a need for fine filter approaches, both for caribou, and for the multitude of other species on the landscape.
 5. Effective conservation initiatives require the involvement and support of the broader community, including all relevant economic interests.
- Discussion / Identification of Information Gaps
- A. The ecosystem approach was seen as a common-sense strategy for conserving natural systems through maintaining or mimicking natural processes. However, there is a need for ecosystem-level research:
 - to define ranges of natural variability and to refine our ability to establish acceptable treatments.
 - to explore and more fully understand the implications of various spatial and temporal scales.
 - to provide better and more flexible treatment options.
 - B. There was a clear recognition that the coarse filter approach will never be sufficient. Research will always be needed to continue monitoring various species for undesirable effects of management, and to better understand linkages between various ecosystem components.
 - C. We must acknowledge limitations to landscape approaches. For example, roads and other developments are in place and will continue to be developed; these fundamentally alter the landscape. We must be realistic in what can be achieved. Monitoring and study of the implications of these artificial elements will be required.
 - D. Management implies underlying assumptions and objectives.
 - Our research and management should acknowledge "givens" such as timber allocations and other human uses.

-Our objectives should be explicit, and they should enjoy the support of the broader community.

-We must incorporate community and economic interests in developing strategies which can actually be implemented. The partnership approach was recommended as a means for doing this.

In summary, the challenge here is to deal with social and economic self-interests explicitly and pla-

ce them in a context of larger conservation goals. This is needed to overcome fear and natural resistance to change.

This report was prepared by George Hamilton (Alberta Environmental Protection), Katherine Parker (University of Northern British Columbia) and Bill Dalton (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources).