



Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Presentation to Joint Panel

Caribou:
Community and Science
Perspectives

1. Cultural importance of Caribou
2. Statement on Hearings
3. Context: Caribou in Canada and Ontario
4. Lake Superior Caribou
5. Institutional Context
6. Biigtigong's Aspirations and Strategy

Key Topics

Biigtigong Statement on Hearings related to Caribou

- Biigtigong is impressed with the acumen and analysis brought by Gen PGM and its experts related to caribou.
- Biigtigong appreciates the diligence and thoroughness that the Panel brought to its assessment and inquiries.
- Biigtigong is encouraged by the undertakings identified by the Panel to date.
- Especially important to Biigtigong will be the manner in which within-range connectivity is facilitated and the manner in which Gen PGM deals with Biigtigong's concerns related to off-site mitigations.

All Caribou are the same species – Rangifer tarandus



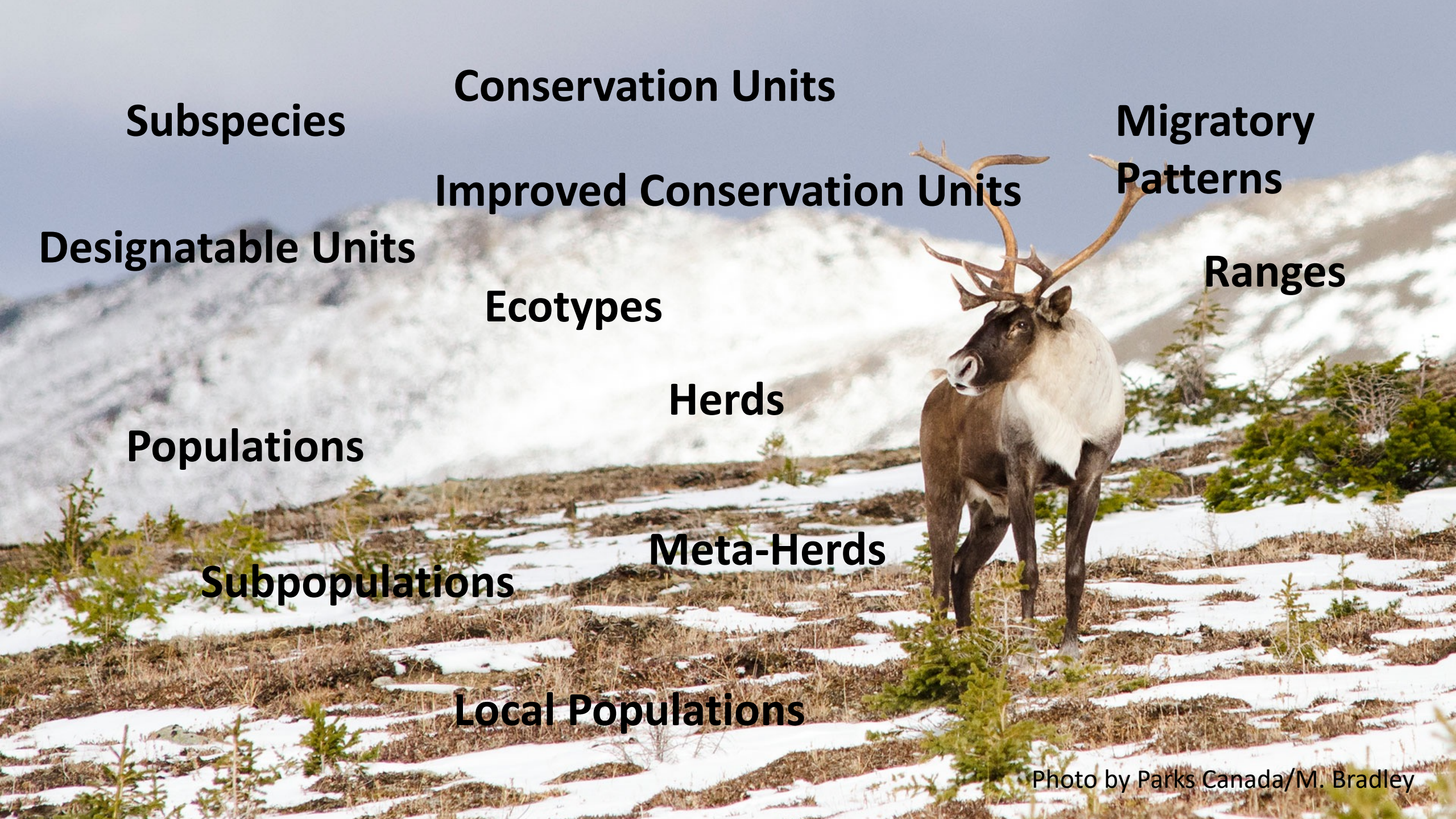




Photo by C. Wedeles



Photo by Parks Canada/M. Bradley



Subspecies

Conservation Units

Migratory

Patterns

Improved Conservation Units

Designatable Units

Ranges

Ecotypes

Herds

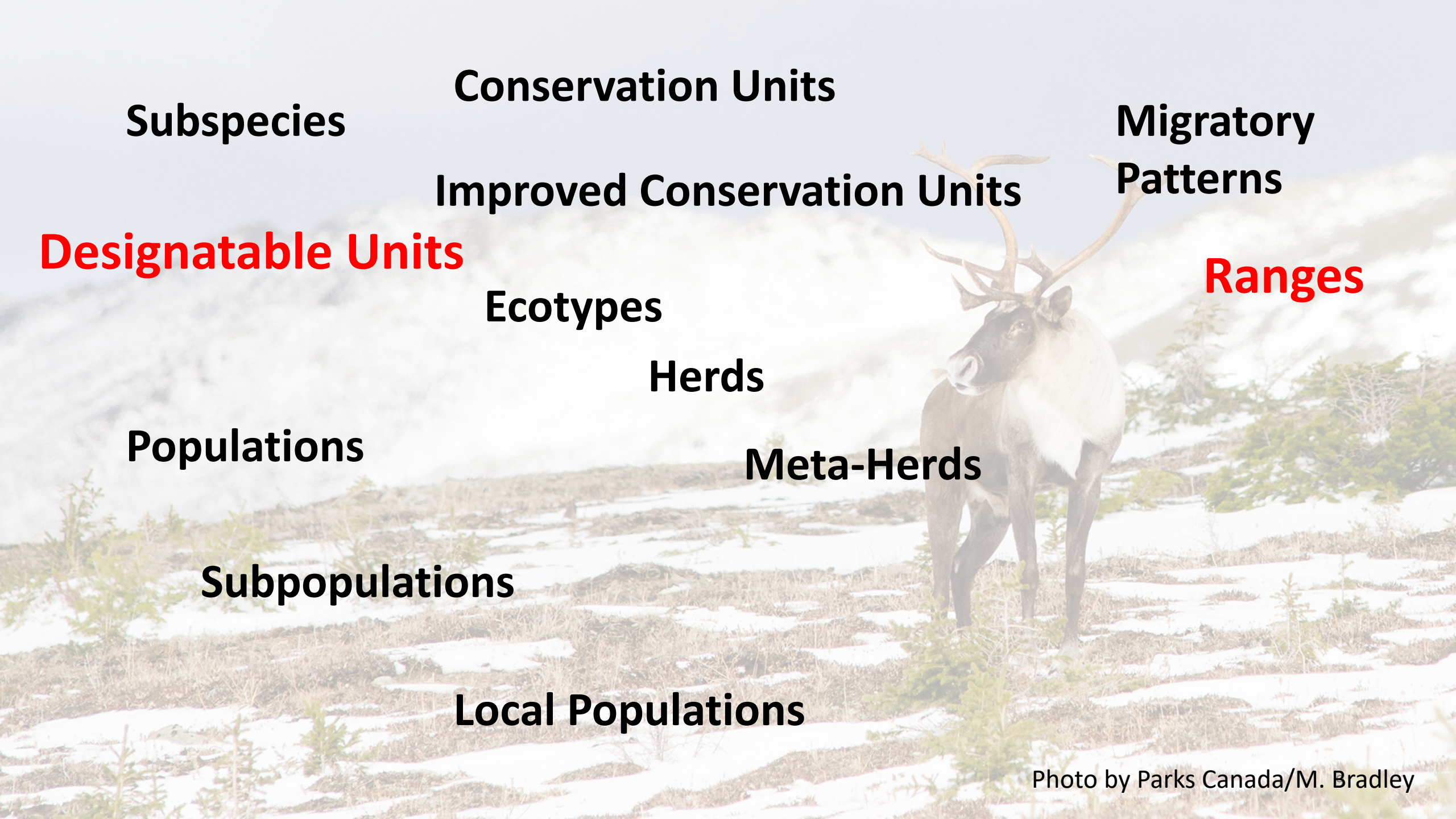
Populations

Meta-Herds

Subpopulations

Local Populations

Photo by Parks Canada/M. Bradley



Subspecies

Conservation Units

**Migratory
Patterns**

Improved Conservation Units

Designatable Units

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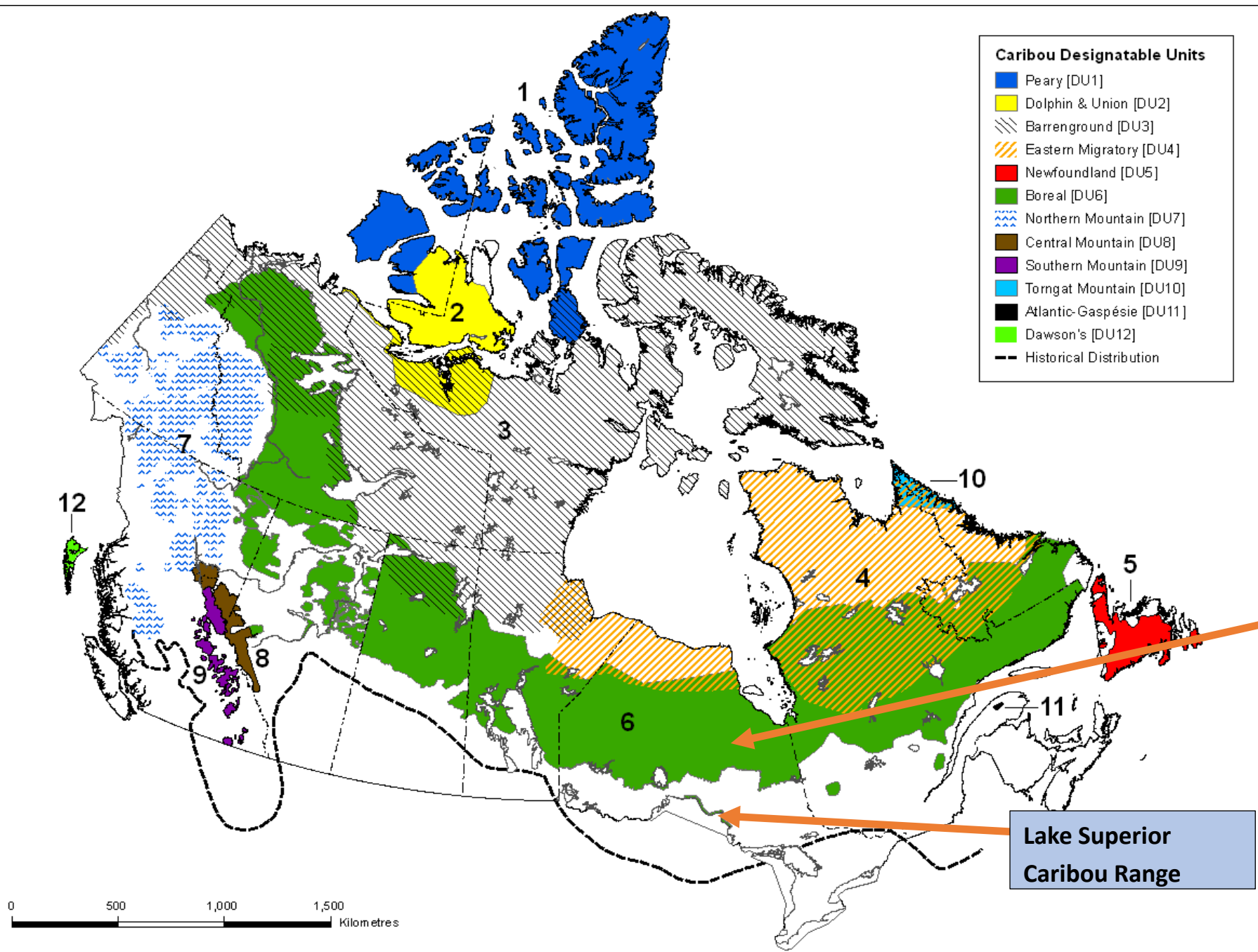
Populations

Meta-Herds

Subpopulations

Local Populations

Photo by Parks Canada/M. Bradley



Designatable Units

- Ecologically, spatially, genetically, and evolutionarily discrete
- Used by COSEWIC

1 – Peary: Threatened

2 – Dolphin: Endangered

3 – Baren Ground: Threatened

4 – Eastern Mig.:Endangered

5 – New’land: Special Concern

6 – Boreal: Threatened

7 – Northern Mtn: Special Concern

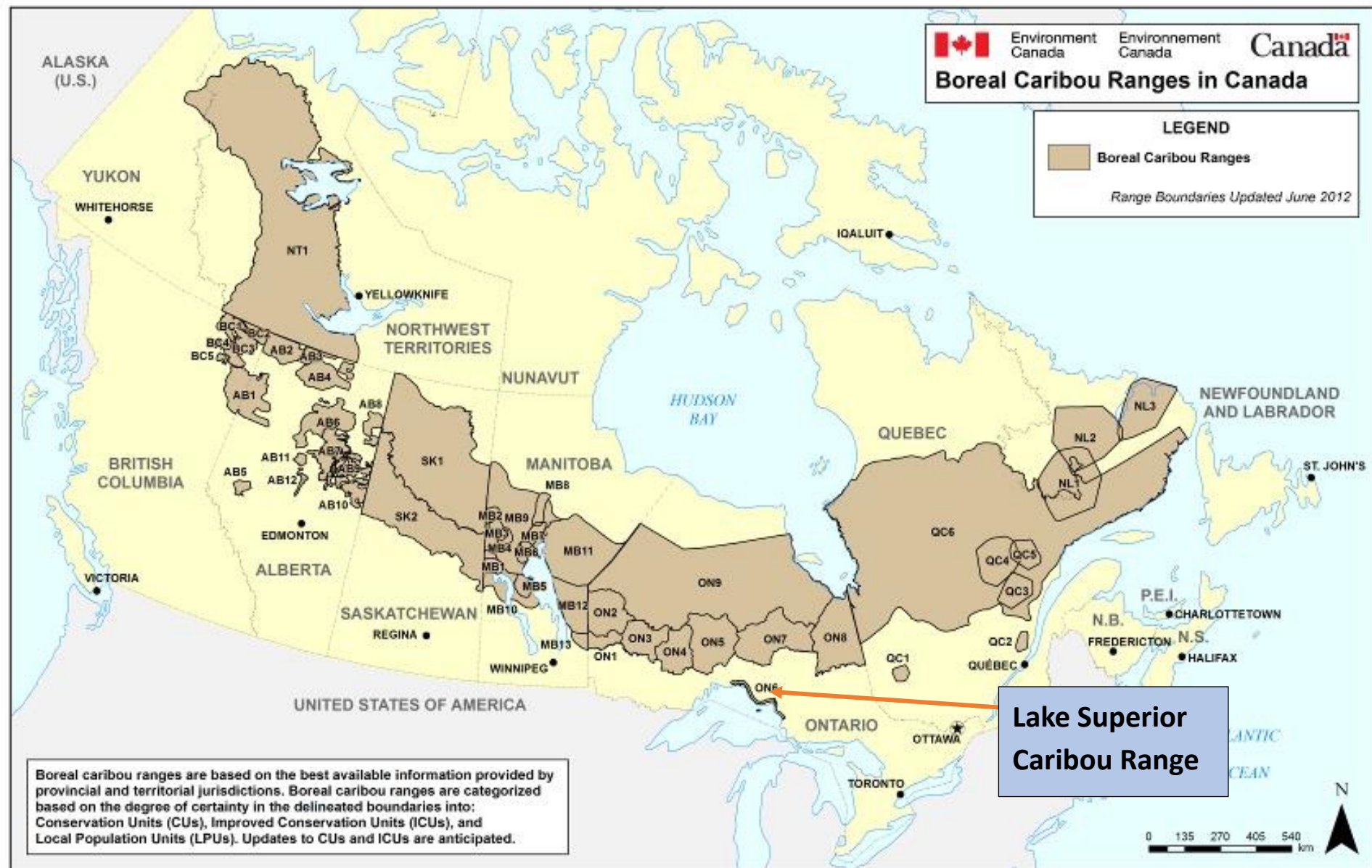
8 – Central Mtn: Endangered

9 – Southern Mtn: Endangered

10 – Tongat Mtn: Endangered

11 – Gaspesie: Endangered

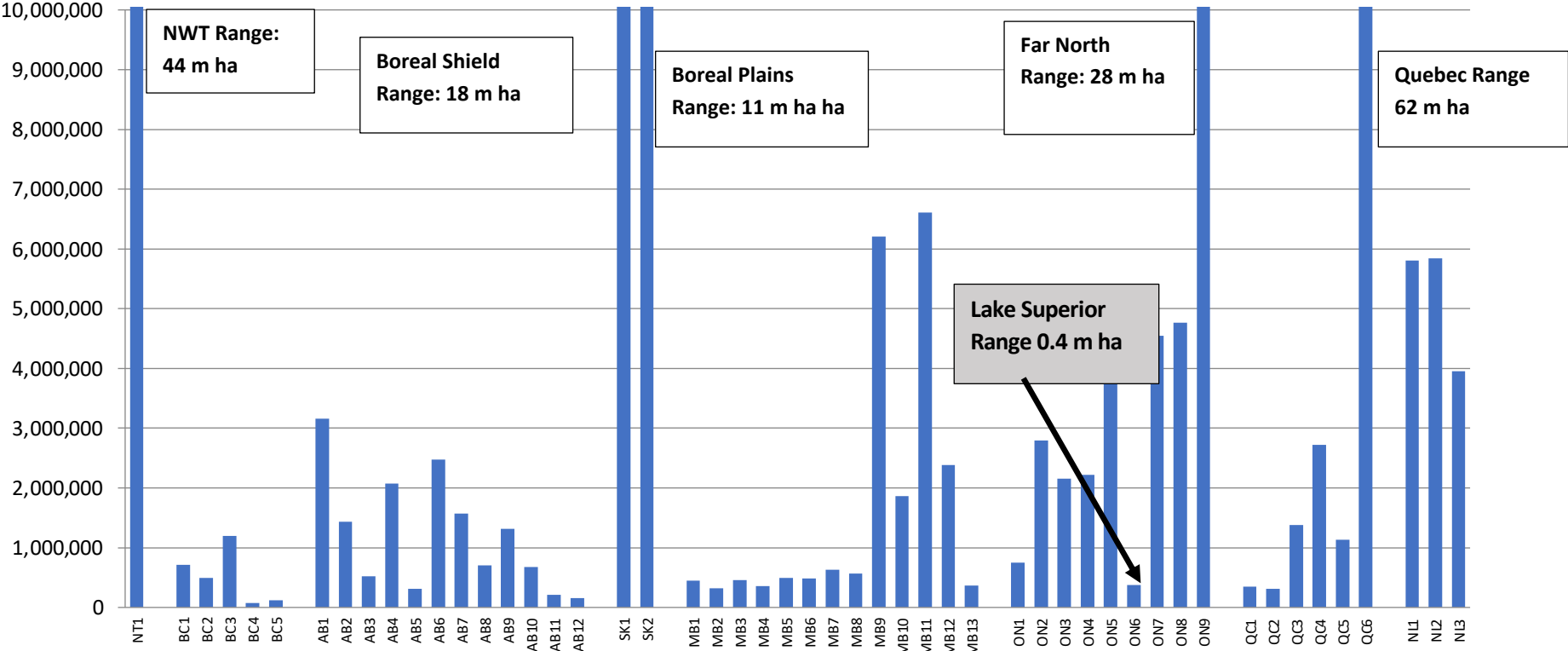
12 – Dawson: Extinct



Boreal Caribou Ranges

- 51 (57) in Canada
- Considerable variation in size
- LSCR is among the smallest and is the most southerly
- Was formerly contiguous with caribou distribution in all directions

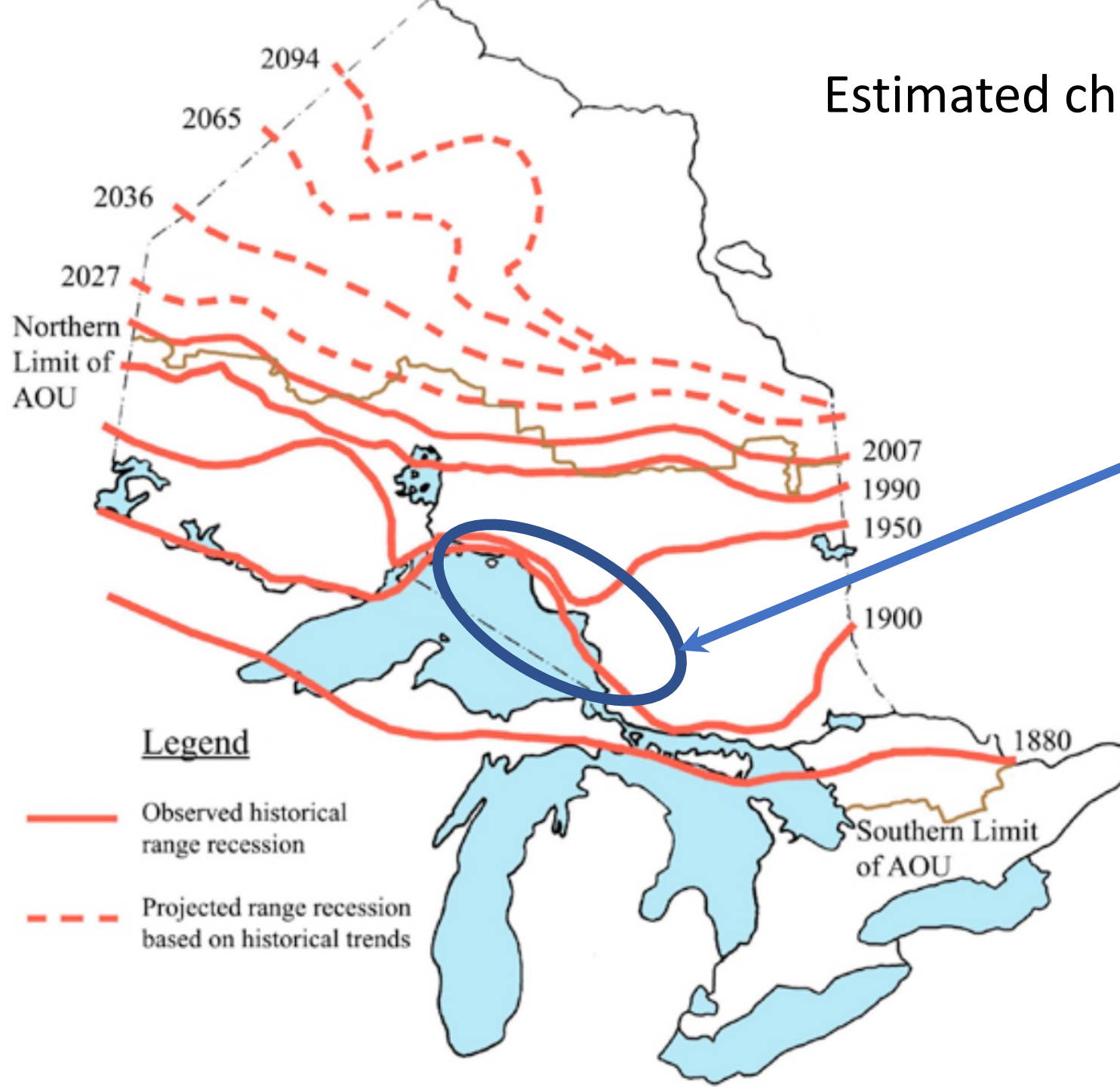
Size of Boreal Caribou Ranges In Canada (millions of ha)



Estimated changes in caribou distribution in Ontario



Estimated changes in caribou distribution in Ontario



- Caribou persisted along L. Superior shore much longer than at comparable latitudes inland
- Why?
- Less disturbance
- Rugged topography (escape habitat)
- Offshore islands – breeding & refuge

Limitations of the Lake Superior Caribou Range

- Isolation
- Shape/width
- Internal and nearby disturbance
- Susceptibility to predation



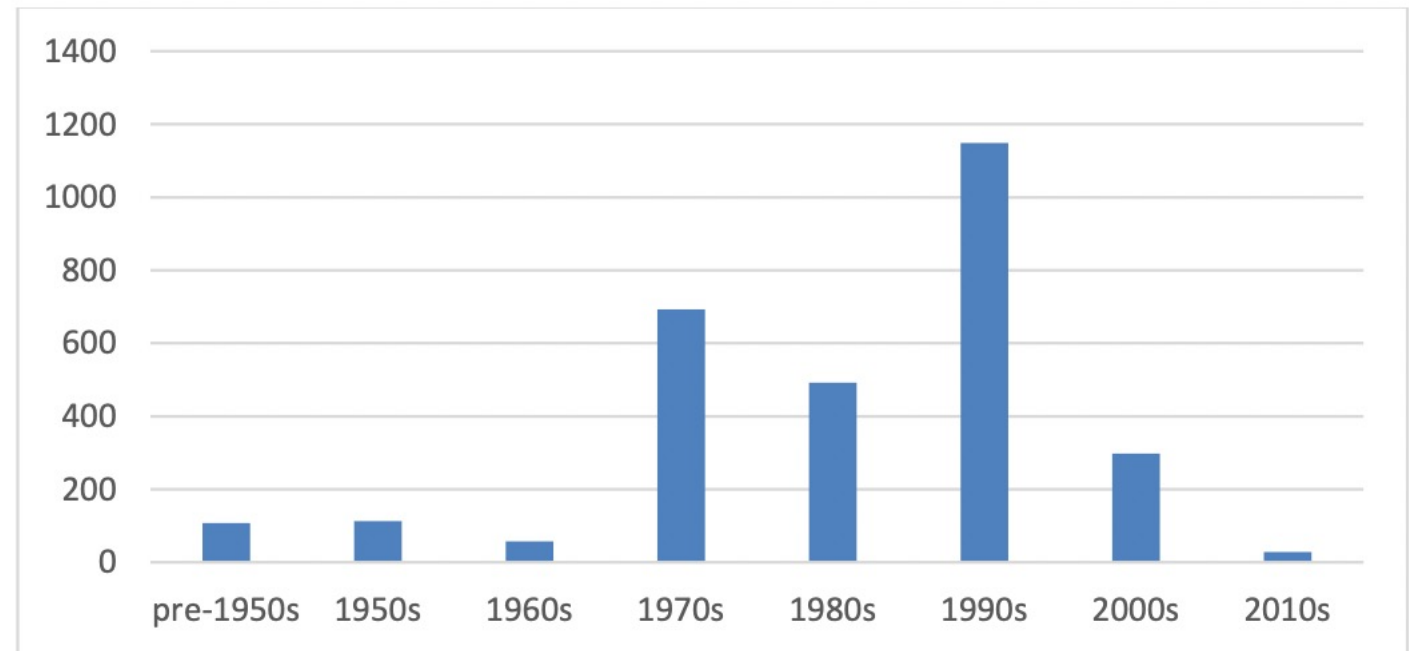
Long-Term and Recent Population in the LSCR

- Caribou have lived in the Lake Superior area for thousands of years
- Likely the only ungulate until mid-1800's
- Caribou presence on islands likely continuous too

- Although the island populations are growing now, stewardship is needed → predator management, translocation to Michipicoten and mainland

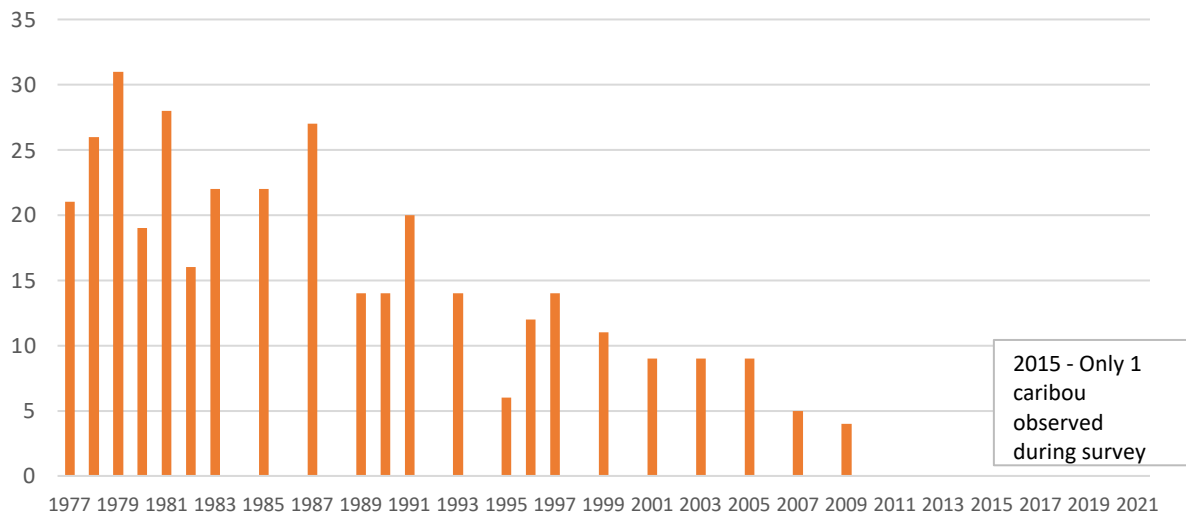
- Population declined in surrounding areas in concert with increased settlement and land changes
- Populations on islands likely waxed and waned
- Increase in 70's and 80's mostly from Slates and Michipicoten
- Wolf incursions in 2010's drove populations down
- Transfer of caribou from the Slates from Michipicoten to Caribou Island likely saved the population
- There are likely no caribou left on the mainland

Documented observations of caribou or sign in the Provincial Caribou Database

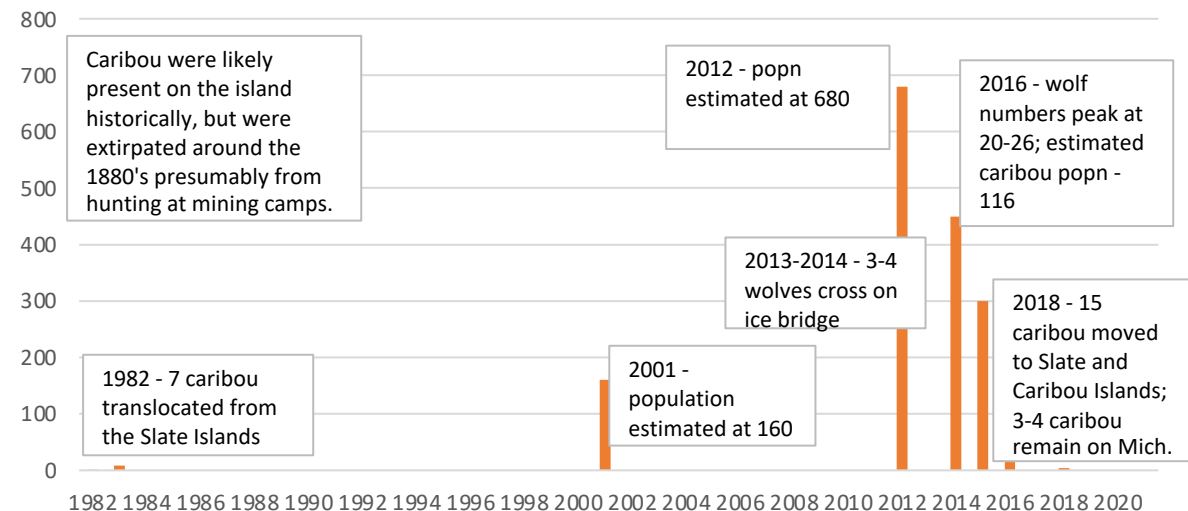


Source: IR6-25 Residual Effects on Caribou

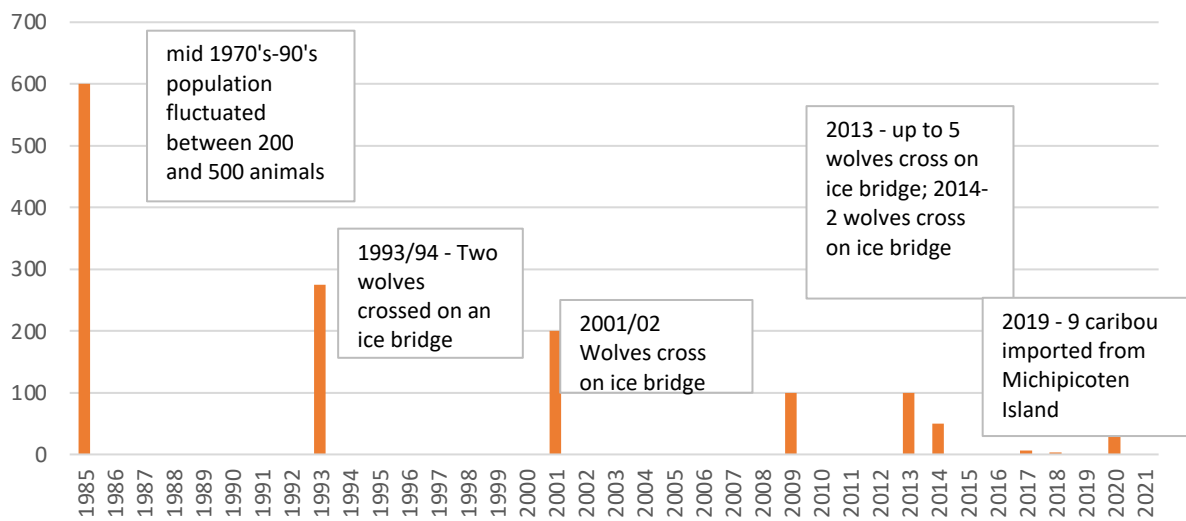
Pukaskwa Park Survey Results



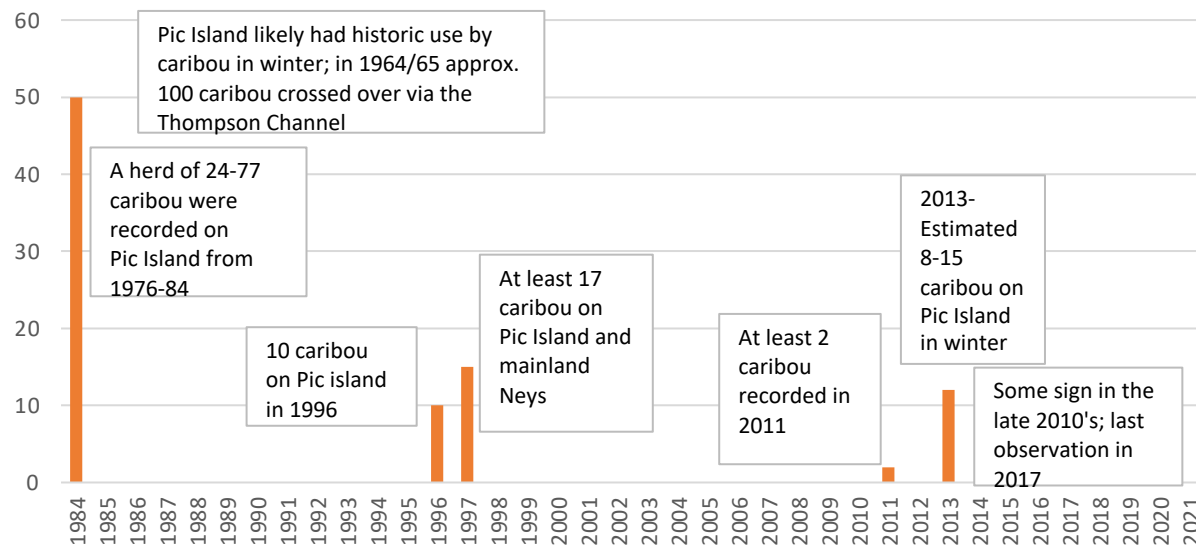
Michipicoten Island Caribou Population Estimates



Slate Islands Caribou Population Estimates



Pic Island and Neys Caribou Population Estimates



Institutional/Policy Context – Ontario Government

Ontario Woodland Caribou Recovery Strategy (2008)

Objectives:

- Protect caribou ranges in support of local caribou survival and recovery
- Reduce known threats associated with range recession and local population decline through immediate action on ranges within the Lake Nipigon, Central Highlands and **Lake Superior Coast recovery zones**
- Delineate and establish range management plans for all caribou ranges

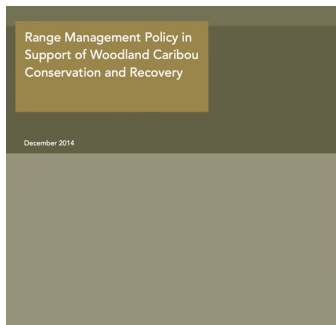


Strategic Elements:

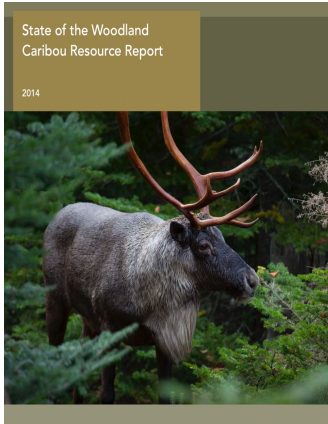
- **The Lake Superior coastal population** will be managed for population security and persistence. The focus will be to protect and manage habitat and encourage connectivity to caribou populations in the North
- “Range Management is the central element of the Caribou Conservation Plan”

Objective

- Maintain or move towards sufficient range condition in all caribou ranges in Ontario
- Policy applies to the area of continuous distribution**excluding the Lake Superior caribou range and the discontinuous distribution**

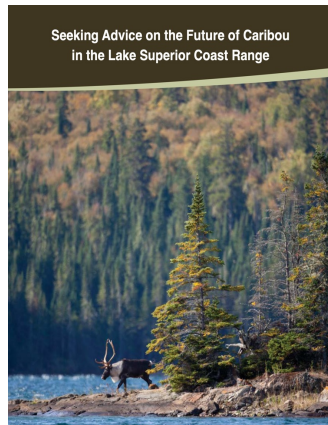


Institutional/Policy Context – Ontario Government



Content:

- Detailed three-part report dealing with progress in meeting recovery commitments; monitoring, and research
- **The Lake Superior Range is explicitly exclude from the document**
- Related Range Assessments are comprehensive, produced for all ranges except Lake Superior Range



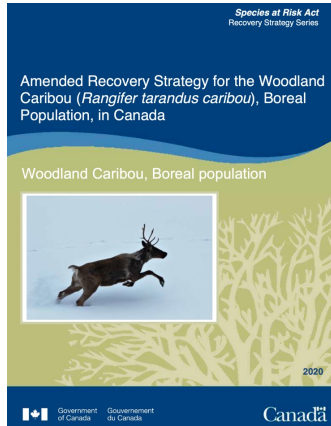
• Sought Public Input on:

- Goal of caribou conservation in the **Lake Superior Caribou Range and Discontinuous Distribution**.
- Support for various habitat management actions (e.g. rehabilitation, limit fragmentation, enhanced forest management direction to address caribou habitat needs) and population mgmt. actions(e.g. predator control, translocation, penning...)
- Released in March 2018. **No summary of input released and no plan produced.**

Conclusion

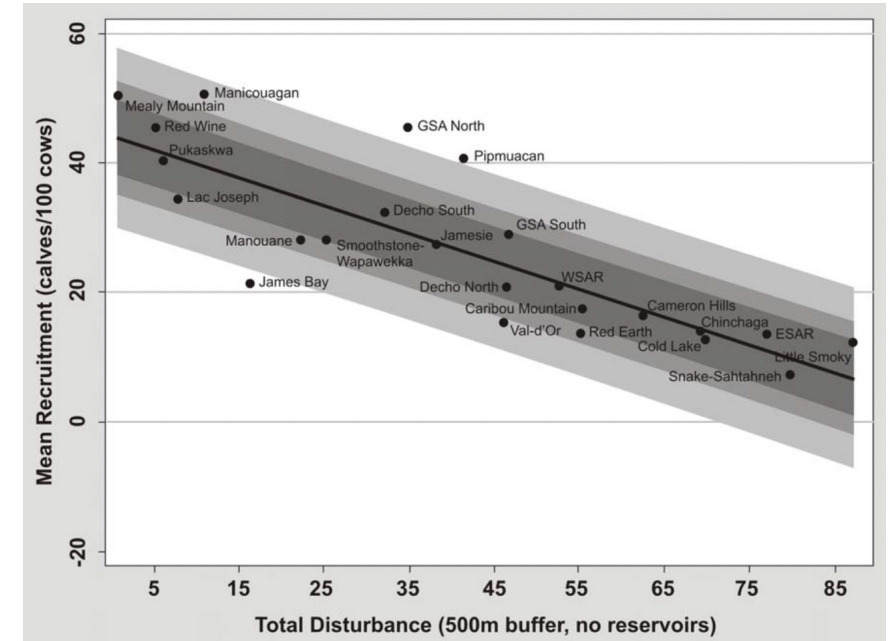
- Ontario has not met its Policy Commitments; and
- Has not provided useful direction for management of the Lake Superior Caribou Range

Institutional/Policy Context – Canada



Content:

- Based on extensive analyses identifying scientific basis for definition of critical habitat
- Benchmark disturbance threshold established
- Applies primarily federal lands



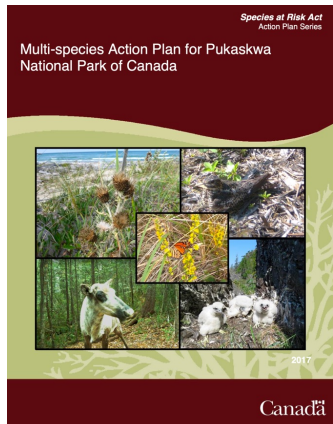
- Section 11 facilitates development of 'Conservation Agreements' between Canada and Provinces
- Draft agreement includes "Develop and implement a management approach for the Lake Superior Coast Range and Discontinuous Distribution (**Good**)"
- Lack of specificity, drawn-out timeline, acquiescence to provincial approach (**Not Good**)

Institutional/Policy Context – Canada (Pukaskwa N.P.)



Key Strategies:

- An Enduring relationship: Honouring the Anishnaabek and Metis and their connection to the land
- A Wilderness Sustained: ...through strengthened ecosystems
- A “Superior” Connection: Making Pukaskwa more relevant to Canadians
- **Caribou Items:**
 - By 2016 – implement preferred recovery strategies for Caribou
 - Collaborate with OMNR, local First Nations and local municipalities in protection of the Lake Superior Coast from Hattie Cove to Michipicoten Harbour, to facilitate Caribou Recovery



Few Caribou-specific items/actions:

- Minimize prescribed fires;
- Visitor education; report sightings
- Identify critical habitat
- Collect scat and mark and recapture information
- Generally not ‘aggressive’ management

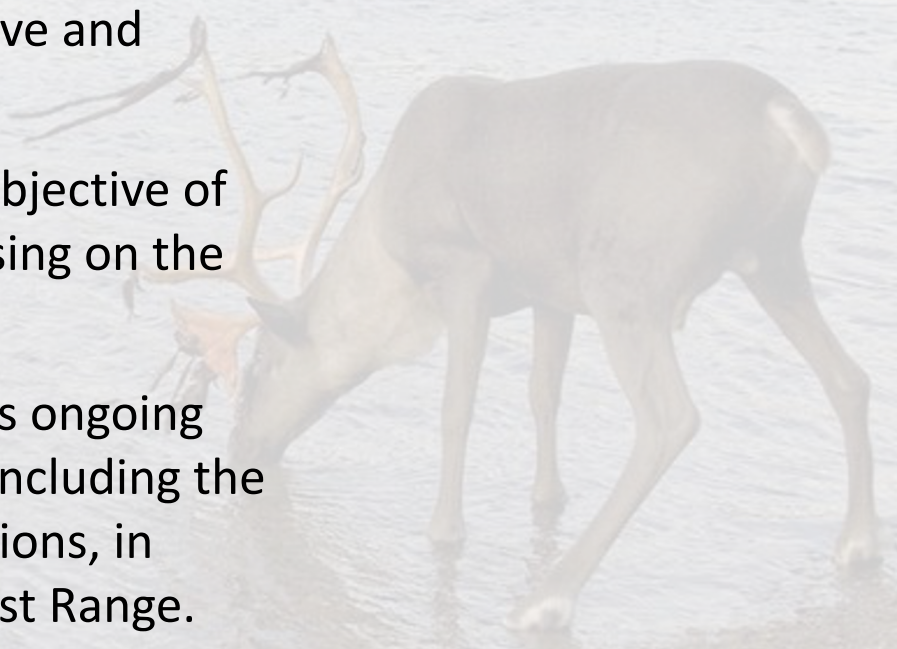
Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Caribou Stewardship Strategy

In light of:

- Biigtigong's Nishnaabeg's strong cultural ties to caribou;
 - Biigtigong Nishnaabeg's ongoing land claim and asserted rights and territory;
 - Tenuous state of the Lake Superior Caribou Herd;
 - Lack of Ontario's progress in planning and sustainable management of Lake Superior caribou; and
 - Uncertain utility of the Section 11 Conservation Agreement
-
- Biigtigong is developing a Caribou Stewardship Strategy for the Lake Superior Coast Range and offshore islands

Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Caribou Stewardship Strategy

Goal: ***Establish a secure and self-sustaining population of caribou in the area centred on the northeast portion of Lake Superior, with particular emphasis on the area encompassed by the Biigtigong Nishnaabeg exclusive and shared title lands.*** Several objectives are encompassed by this goal:

- 
- I. Contribute to the security of the Lake Superior Coast Range by establishing protected and carefully-managed caribou populations on the offshore islands in Biigtigong Nishnaabeg's Exclusive and Shared Title Area.
 - II. Manage caribou populations consistent with long-term objective of re-establishing viable populations on the mainland, focusing on the area encompassed by the Lake Superior Coast Range.
 - III. Within the broader framework of Biigtigong Nishnaabeg's ongoing Land Claim, collaborate with other agencies and parties including the Governments of Ontario and Canada, and other First Nations, in securing the caribou population in the Lake Superior Coast Range.
 - IV. Increase the cultural awareness of caribou and its role in the ecosystem and Indigenous cultural among the Biigtigong Nishnaabeg and other residents along the north coast of Lake Superior.

Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Caribou Stewardship Strategy

Strategic Elements:

Strategy 1: Extensive Indigenous Involvement:

1. Leadership/co-management role for Indigenous Communities in managing caribou
2. Integration of Traditional and Community Ecological Knowledge
3. Increase Indigenous capacity

Strategy 2: Establish and Secure Island Populations

1. Ensure Michipicoten Island is predator free
2. Transfer caribou to Michipicoten Island
3. Monitor caribou on all islands
4. Predator control as necessary

Strategy 3. Maintain Island Populations at Appropriate Levels

1. Establish carrying capacity for islands
2. Manage populations to remain under carrying capacity by:
 - Regular monitoring
 - Transfer caribou to mainland receiving sites
 - Controlled harvest if necessary
 - Protect caribou



Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Caribou Stewardship Strategy

Strategic Elements:

Strategy 4: Monitoring

1. Monitor ice conditions
2. Monitor islands for presence of predators
3. Monitor caribou populations on all islands and mainland

Strategy 5: Re-establish Mainland Population

1. Identify and prioritize mainland receiving sites
2. Transfer caribou to mainland sites
3. Monitor caribou populations on all islands and mainland
4. Ongoing transfer of caribou from islands to mainland

Strategy 6. Protect Caribou

1. Predator control if necessary
2. Removal of white-tailed deer as required
3. Control moose populations if necessary
4. Increase public awareness



Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Caribou Stewardship Strategy

Strategic Elements:

Strategy 7: Protect Mainland Caribou Habitat

1. Work in collaboration with Ontario and Canada to maintain/improve habitat
2. Cease industrial forest management in the LSCR
3. Establish buffer zone along LSCR
4. Control/rehabilitate linear disturbances
5. Improve continuity planning in Discontinuous Distribution

Strategy 8: Increase Awareness

1. Within Indigenous communities
2. Within non-Indigenous communities along Lake Superior Coast
3. Within Ontario's Population

Strategy 9: Work in Collaboration

1. Collaborative efforts with and between governments
2. Collaboration between Indigenous communities
3. Collaboration with Resource Industries



Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Caribou Stewardship Strategy

Strategic Elements:

Strategy 10: Address Institutional Barriers

1. Identify and assess barriers
2. Establish and implement collaborative process to remove barriers

Strategy 11: Adaptive Management

1. Monitoring of populations and habitats
2. Incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge
3. Identify reasons for successes and failures
4. Revise management



A silhouette of a moose with large antlers stands in shallow water, its reflection visible below. The scene is set against a warm, golden sunset sky. To the right, a dark, rocky shoreline slopes down into the water.

Questions?