

## Arrow Lakes Caribou Society (ALCS)

### Central Selkirk Maternity Pen: Project Overview

The Central Selkirk Caribou Maternity Pen project is aimed at the recovery of the Central Selkirk subpopulation of Southern Mountain Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*). Southern Mountain Woodland Caribou are listed as a threatened species under the Species at Risk Act and the Central Selkirk subpopulation is the southernmost population in North America. The Central Selkirk subpopulation has been reduced from 92 to 28 adults from 2010 to 2021 and has seen a decline of 84% from 1997 to 2018. The recovery of this population is an important step in halting caribou population decline and preventing the further extirpation of herds from historical caribou ranges in Canada and the United States. The maternity pen will help to alleviate environmental pressures on pregnant caribou and calves, improve overall survival, and help return caribou into native habitat in healthy condition.

A maternity pen will greatly benefit the Central Selkirk subpopulation and will increase the effectiveness of other recovery actions being used in the area to recover the population. The Central Selkirk maternity pen is located in the Kuskanax Creek drainage near the Nakusp Hot Springs, approximately 10 km northeast of the Village of Nakusp. The Nakusp Hot Springs pen site was identified by ALCS using a coarse set of criteria and local knowledge and subsequently screened by an expert team. The location is within caribou habitat and caribou experts are confident that the chosen site is an optimal location for caribou penning. Pen construction began in Fall 2019 and will be fully complete in Winter 2021. The outstanding operational components to be completed are the installation of fence gates, set up of electric fencing, water system, and installation of caribou monitoring equipment.

The provincial government B.C. Caribou Recovery Program is involved in the project and has provided partial funding for pen construction and written support for pen operations. Pregnant female caribou will be captured in March 2022 and placed in the pen for their pregnancy and calving. Cows and newborn calves will be fed, cared for, and monitored over the spring and released into their natural habitat in July 2022.

ALCS is part of an international network of species at risk recovery organizations, including the International Caribou Foundation (ICF) and the Caribou Conservation Breeding Foundation (CCBF). ALCS has received funding, technical support, and construction materials from the ICF, previous penning projects (RCRW, Klinse-za, Porcupine Creek), and the CCBF. The Kalispel Tribe of Indians in the United States have provided technical support for the project as well as a large donation for the development of the maternity pen. First Nations in B.C. have been contacted to gauge interest in participating in the project. ALCS members, other local and international groups, and individuals through a GoFundMe campaign have shown their support through cash donations and in-kind and volunteer contributions.

ALCS is confident that the maternity pen project will continue for multiple years and will have a positive impact on both caribou populations and local communities. The maternity pen will provide opportunities for community engagement through volunteer work, stakeholder involvement, education sessions, scientific research, and public reports. The pen will also provide more data on the impact of maternity penning on southern mountain caribou and its effectiveness as a recovery action. Data collected during capture and penning are valuable information for the study of southern mountain caribou and will help to further our understanding of caribou populations and their long-term recovery.