

Moose Media

Week of June 15 to 21

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Province to go ahead with cow and calf moose harvest in Kootenay and Omineca regions

The two regions will also see wolf culling

Burns Lake District News

PRIYANKA KETKAR

Jun. 17, 2020 1:30 a.m. LOCAL NEWSNEWS

There will be a harvest season this year for cow moose and calves in the Kootenay and Omineca regions, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations (FLNRO) has confirmed. Specifically the harvests will be opened in the Revelstoke area, and Parsnip, north of Prince George.

Earlier last week, the B.C. Liberal party sounded an alarm over a leaked NDP memo and suggested that there would be culling of cow moose and calves in order to save the caribou population. The memo indicated that the recovery of the mountain caribou was a top government priority and in order to secure their population, removing a few moose was a “worthwhile trade-off.”

“We had steady declines in moose population and significant declines in main areas around the province. Because the government’s priority is caribou, they are willing to accept the decline of moose and I find that unacceptable,” said B.C. liberal MLA John Rustad.

When asked about the culling by Lakes District News, the government categorically denied that there would be any culling however, they confirmed that the ministry would be issuing hunting licenses this year. A total of 400 authorizations across B.C. will be issued, which is an increase from last year’s 357. The harvest season will begin on Oct. 16 and would carry on until Dec. 10 however the exact duration would vary for each region.

Corrina Leween, the Chief for the Cheslatta Carrier Nation said, “A lot of our people don’t hunt anymore because we are trying to regulate for future generations, trying to get the population back and then we hear that they are opening harvest season out there. Cheslatta is in strong opposition of that.”

The government believes that the management of the cow moose and calf population with a harvest would help reduce predator population, mainly wolves and therefore reduce the threat to the caribou population.

Rustad maintains the moose harvest “makes no sense whatsoever. Wolves will simply go and hunt for food elsewhere, which will be caribou. If wolves are the problem then we have to reduce the wolf population. We don’t need to be reducing the moose population to do that,” said Rustad.

Leween agreed with Rustad, saying that “If anything, perhaps the predators should be concentrated on, rather than the moose” as otherwise the wolves would just go after other animals.

RELATED: Village bids to boost moose numbers

According to a 2019 government release, predator reduction for caribou recovery was also being considered in conjunction with primary prey management i.e. cow moose harvest. In fact, the forest ministry has confirmed that wolf culling will take place this year in the Kootenay

Region and Omineca Region, with 10 wolves to be culled in Revelstoke and 91 in the Parsnip area. This endeavour will cost \$156, 000 in Revelstoke and \$173, 000 in the Parsnip area. The ministry added that such predator management was essential to the survival of the caribou in the short-term.

The forest ministry said that the moose harvest is not new and the “wildlife management action has been occurring in the Parsnip Valley and northwest of Revelstoke for over a decade.” They also added that in the last five years, approximately 77 per cent of cow or calf moose hunting authorizations had been allocated to caribou recovery areas and that has been expanded to include the Kootenay Region and Omineca Region.

While the total number of cow calf harvest has declined from 584 in 2011 to 79 in 2019, and the cow calf harvest is now mostly focused in the caribou recovery areas, from 28 in 2011 to 74 in 2019, it is still a concern for many.

Rustad said, “What is concerning of course, is that there are many caribou areas around the province including the Burns Lake area, the Tweedsmuir area locally. And if the government thinks that the right thing to do is reduce moose in order to save caribou, I worry that it may extend to beyond what they are currently doing.”

Chief Leween has been a staunch supporter of the moose recovery bid and expressed her disapproval over the process, insisting that the right way to go about this would be through dialogue with the locals living on the lands, with the First Nations elders.

“Our elders know when you hunt the moose, when you don’t hunt the moose, and what you take and what you don’t take. That knowledge is not something you read in a textbook. So, what needs to happen is that the government needs to provide dialogue with the affected First Nations communities and explain what their logic is, what their plans are for the future in regards to the cow and the calf season being opened.”

Psyllakis: Limited entry hunt for moose calves and their mothers not final

Castanet, 18-Jun-2020 08:00

The provincial government says its announced limited-entry hunt for moose cows and calves is not set in stone and no final decision has been made, following an uproar by some in the conservation community.

Jennifer Psyllakis, Director of Wildlife and Habitat Branch with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development says they have been hearing "concerns from the public and hunters and we're working on those conversations."

The proposed changes for the 2020-2021 Limited Entry Hunting regulations outlines this year's changes as:

18 cow or calf tags for Thompson Region 3, Elephant Hill wildfire areas 212 cow or calf tags, an increase from 175 tags in 2019 - up 37 - in Kootenay Region 4 Four tags too many - Cariboo Region 5 161 tags - cow or calf - Omineca/Peace Region 7 And another new limited entry hunt this year for five more cow or calf moose for Okanagan Region 8 The proposal would increase the number of cow or calf moose hunting authorizations up by 60 - 400 for this year, up from 340 in 2019

Psyllakis says the move is primarily geared towards protecting endangered caribou in B.C.

The largest increase in moose tags is in the Kootenays where wolf control efforts to protect caribou has led to an increase in the number of moose in the region.

Jesse Zeman, Director of Fish and Wildlife with the BC Wildlife Federation says, "more moose means more predators which means less caribou because they get eaten by predators," says Zeman. "Revelstoke north, that's where the caribou live and we've been doing wolf management there, so we've got a moose population that is growing rapidly."

Psyllakis says, "the tentative change is, from a scientific and statistical perspective, very insignificant."

Psyllakis says her department is continuing consultations with First Nations in a couple of areas of the province and a final decision should be made in the coming weeks.

Donna Barnett – Response to Doug Donaldson’s Letter

100 Mile Free Press

June 17, 2020

Letter to the Editor:

Whenever you find yourself between a rock and a hard place, the easiest thing to do is blame someone else for your misfortune, and that is exactly what Minister Doug Donaldson did in the June 11 edition of the 100 Mile Free Press when he refused to accept responsibility for the NDP's latest proposal to open up hunting on baby moose and their mothers.

Minister Donaldson thinks the only way he can save highly endangered caribou populations is by starving out wolves through an antlerless moose hunt. But anyone with any common sense knows that wolves will simply target caribou if moose are not available.

Predator management is the best way to save the caribou. Fewer wolves mean less threat and Minister Donaldson should admit that his new proposal is just one giant experiment based on comments made by his staff last week.

The director of the Wildlife and Habitat Branch, Jennifer Psyllakis, stated on CBC radio last week that: "Some of the work is very well documented in the literature across North America. But this particular management approach, we're somewhat on the forefront of the research with respect to how successful it will be for caribou recovery."

So in other words, Minister Donaldson is taking a management approach used in very different eco-environments in the hopes it may apply to B.C.'s unique caribou populations. That's a long stretch by any means.

The fact is Minister Donaldson, moose and caribou populations have plummeted under your watch over the past three years and there is no one to blame except yourself. Hunters, First Nations and locals alike know this and we all know this is a disaster waiting to happen.

The only way to save caribou and moose populations is to directly control the predators. Reducing their food supply and hoping to starve them out is just wishful thinking about a highly adaptive and resourceful predator.

I encourage everyone to sign the online change.org petition entitled "Help save B.C.'s baby moose population" and put a stop to this utter nonsense.

Sincerely,

Donna Barnett, MLA
Cariboo-Chilcotin

Dan Davies: Kill the moose to save the caribou?

Alaska Highway News

JUNE 16, 2020 09:49 AM

One of the amazing perks about living in the North Peace is our proximity to some of the greatest wildlife this province has to offer. I am sure everyone reading this is well aware that for us to continue to enjoy one of the greatest backyards in the world, we need to take care of it.

Preserving balance in our ecosystem is no small task and requires the co-operation of everyone in our province. Unfortunately, sometimes what people in power feel is the best foot forward can be a step in the wrong direction.

Recently, the current NDP government has been engaged in a deeply flawed plan to address our dwindling Southern Mountain Caribou populations — one which has failed miserably.

For years, the caribou file has been marked by a lack of public consultation and little consideration for rural communities. Making matters worse, government is now steaming ahead with a ludicrous new plan to kill moose calves and their mothers in the name of saving caribou.

How will killing moose save caribou? That is a great question. The logic behind this goes as follows: wolves are a major predator for caribou and another staple of their diet is moose. The more moose we kill, the fewer wolves there will be and the more caribou we will save. So in order to save our caribou populations, the NDP have declared open season on moose calves and cows.

Needless to say, the logic is a bit flawed. Firstly, if wolves can't find as many moose, won't they just look for more caribou? Secondly, is this really the greatest option we have to protect the caribou? Killing calves and mothers? I am all for controlled game hunting, but I feel like we have so many more options available to protect our caribou populations and I am not the only one feels this way.

Thousands of British Columbians concerned about preserving moose populations as well as caribou have voiced their opposition to this announcement.

There is even a petition circulating with thousands of signatures calling on this government to reverse their decision and return to the consultation table to listen to the advice of our conservationists and community leaders.

If you would like to add your name to this petition, please check out the BC Liberal Caucus Facebook page for more details. Together, we can create a solution that will help preserve the right balance in our ecosystem, not damage it further.

Dan Davies is the MLA for Peace River North.

Robert Koopmans: The Outdoor Narrative: The science behind helping caribou by hunting "baby moose"

Kamloops This Week, Page , 17-Jun-2020

By Robert Koopmans

There's been a lot of chatter over the past few weeks about an apparent plan on the part of the B.C. government to save endangered caribou populations in parts of the province by reducing moose numbers, specifically by hunting more cow moose and calves.

I say "apparent plan" because I haven't seen an official announcement from government anywhere, nor any kind of release of information or research in support of this kind of measure. What I have seen is a great deal of outrage, mostly from anti-hunters and B.C. Liberal politicians. There have also been concerns expressed by some hunters who are concerned about declining moose numbers in some areas. It's all led to a confusing cacophony of noise.

Local B.C. Liberal MLAs are raising the loudest fuss, going as far as labelling the whole idea a poorly conceived plan to cull "baby moose." One of our Kamloops MLAs was on Radio NL last week and used the term "baby moose" more times than I could count, which made me think there is a PR strategy at play here.

I can easily imagine how someone in the B.C. Liberal Party's communications machine came upon the idea of using "baby moose" in public conversations because they suspect the word "baby" will inflame the non-hunting public more quickly and easily than the usual term used to describe a "baby moose," which is "calf."

Is there a difference? Yes, I think there is, and political attempts to derail emerging government policy with inflammatory rhetoric doesn't sit well with me.

Why would anyone shoot a "baby moose," our MLA was asked by the incensed Radio NL interviewer? Well, there is one pretty good reason, which is why cow and calf moose have been identified for decades as legal game in many areas -- they are pretty fine eating. And, for the record, we eat "babies" of domestic species as well, including "baby sheep" and "baby cows." That's lamb chops and veal cutlets, for those who have forgotten such things.

So, how does a fellow make sense of this complex issue when diverse agendas angrily try to hijack the conversation? Turn to the science, I say. Not that that is easy to do. The government certainly isn't helping us understand the apparent rationale for this apparent policy.

With some Google research, however, I did turn up an interesting story in the New York Times from August 2017, which references an Alberta researcher's study about, guess what, how it might be possible to save caribou by reducing moose populations. I'm happy to provide the links to whomever asks for them.

The 2017 research paper, written by Dr. Robert Serrouya, a biologist at the University of Alberta, details his efforts to understand the relationships between moose, caribou and wolves and how efforts to save caribou must consider multi-faceted solutions to several problems, many of them caused by people.

The narrative described by the research paper essentially goes like this:

Mountain caribou were once significantly more present in B.C. ranges than today. Decades of logging, which changed the habitat, opened up big swathes of southern B.C. to moose. The moose migrated from traditional boreal forests in the north and into these new areas, where they had never before existed. Wolves, the moose's traditional predator, soon followed and wolves, being efficient predators, were also happy to eat caribou when the opportunity arose. Caribou, being unaccustomed to being chased by wolves, didn't fare so well.

Now, traditional thinking to date has been to kill wolves to save caribou. Killing wolves, however, is also publicly unpalatable. As well, it's largely ineffective. Research acknowledges that at least 80 per cent of wolves must be eliminated in an area to make a difference for caribou. That level of wolf reduction is almost impossible to achieve without poison, which affects many other species and creates new kinds of problems.

What Dr. Serrouya noted in his paper, however, is there is a counter-intuitive link between moose, wolves and caribou. It seems that when moose numbers fall steeply in places where moose never before existed, wolf populations also drop. The moose-wolf relationship is strong and Serrouya's on-the-ground GPS research shows that wolves leave an area when their preferred prey (moose) disappear.

And that benefits caribou, says Dr. Serrouya's paper.

There are other examples from other places that also support this theory. Serrouya's research provides examples of how native foxes in California's Channel Islands were saved, not by reducing the populations of golden eagles that were killing the foxes, but by reducing the number of feral pigs that had showed up in the islands. It seems it was the feral pigs that attracted the fox-killing eagles, and when the pigs were removed below a certain level, the eagles moved on.

In South Africa, researchers found that significant poaching of African buffalo led to reduced lion populations, which caused pronounced increases in impala populations.

I have no way of knowing whether Dr. Serrouya's research informed the B.C. government's apparent decision to save caribou by increasing sport hunting of moose cows and calves in some areas. I reiterate -- it would be nice to know what the scientific rationale for the government's proposal might be.

Maybe one day soon they will share it with us.

The fact is, however, there is good Canadian science out there that supports the notion that hunting moose cows and calves might help caribou without killing wolves. With that in mind, I think it would be wise for many who oppose the idea to rein in the angry, simplistic commentary. Let's listen with open minds to those who have spent the time deeply exploring these issues and consider the possibility they might actually know what they are talking about.

And please, let's stop talking about culling "baby moose."