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Resource Values Assessment: Wildlife Habitat Areas

State of Knowledge:

- British Columbia is home to tens of thousands of plant and animal species living in a rich diversity of habitats. Many of these species and habitats are at risk and vulnerable to forest and range impacts.
- A **wildlife habitat area** is designated under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* as an area that identifies necessary habitat for the survival of a **species at risk**, such as woodland caribou, grizzly bear and American white pelican (to name a few). The definition of species at risk includes endangered, threatened or vulnerable species of vertebrates, invertebrates, plants and plant communities.
- Designations are based on best available science, local knowledge and other expertise, and are supported by extensive stakeholder and First Nations consultation. Considerations vary by species but can include key breeding, natal, wintering or feeding habitats for a population or sub-population.
- Designations involve either a set amount of the timber harvesting land base or targets in a land use plan.
- Forest activities such as harvesting may be permitted in many wildlife habitat areas but must follow the **general wildlife measures** or meet an objective set out to ensure habitat conditions are maintained for the designated species. The most sensitive wildlife habitat areas exclude harvesting unless there is a forest health or safety issue.

Current Condition:

- Wildlife habitat area designations make up approximately 0% of the productive forest land base of the Prince George Timber Supply Area; 0% in the Lakes TSA; 15.1% in the Quesnel TSA; 8.1% in the Williams Lake TSA; and 1.9% in the 100 Mile House TSA.
- The largest wildlife habitat areas are designated to manage and protect woodland caribou habitat (both mountain ecotype and northern ecotype) – 234,538 hectares in the Quesnel TSA; 379,349 hectares in the Williams Lake TSA; and 20,234 hectares in the 100 Mile House TSA. In the Prince George and Lakes TSAs, caribou habitats are designated as Ungulate Winter Ranges instead of wildlife habitat areas.
- Wildlife habitat areas have also been designated for badger (100 Mile House TSA), great basin spadefoot (100 Mile House TSA), American white pelican (Williams Lake and Quesnel TSAs), great blue heron (Williams Lake and Quesnel TSAs), Prairie falcon (Williams Lake TSA) and grizzly bear (Williams Lake TSA).
- Wildlife habitat areas have been designated for badger, lewis's woodpecker, williamson's sapsucker, grizzly bear, tailed frogs, western screech owl, rattlesnakes and great basin spadefoot toads in the Merritt and Kamloops TSAs. Wildlife habitat area designations make up approximately 412 hectares of timber harvesting landbase within the Kamloops TSA, and 3,036 hectares of timber harvesting land base within the Merritt TSA.

Sustainability Risk:

- Designated wildlife habitat areas factor in economic and social considerations (refer to Identified Wildlife Management Strategy), and represent a balanced and compromised approach to maintain habitat for survival of species at risk.
- Reductions in wildlife habitat areas and general wildlife measures are likely to result in negative population implications for species at risk, possibly resulting in locally and regionally depressed populations. In the worst case scenario, it could lead to compromised population status and possibly extirpation (long-term loss of the species from the area).
- Because these species are already at risk (i.e. endangered, threatened or vulnerable), further reductions in habitat and population could result in increasing protection actions required under the federal *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*.

Supporting Information:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frpa/iwms/index.html>