



June 11, 2012

Resource Values Assessment: Ungulate Winter Range

State of Knowledge:

- Ungulate Winter Range is a designated area under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* that is identified as being necessary for the winter survival of an ungulate species such as moose, deer, caribou and mountain goats.
- Designations are based on best available science, local knowledge and other expertise, and are supported by extensive stakeholder and First Nations consultation. Considerations include thermal cover, security cover and forage sources, as well ensuring these areas maintain ungulates across their natural range.
- Designations must not exceed a specified area of the timber harvesting land base.
- Although there is no harvesting in most Ungulate Winter Ranges, in portions of some ranges a modified harvest can improve habitat conditions for ungulates. For example:
 - In the Prince George Timber Supply Area, timber harvesting is allowed as long as sufficient older forest (40% at 140 years or older) and cover (more than 56% Douglas-fir or spruce crown closure) is maintained.
 - For the Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, timber harvesting is allowed in deer winter ranges, and must result in retention of specified amounts of forest cover.
 - For the Kamloops TSA and Merritt TSAs timber harvesting must result in retention of specified amounts of forest cover, with the addition of providing visual cover for moose in some areas of the Kamloops TSA.

Current condition:

- Ungulate Winter Range designations make up approximately 13% of the Prince George TSA; 10% of the Williams Lake TSA; 4% of the Quesnel TSA; 14% of the 100 Mile House TSA; 23% of the Kamloops TSA and approximately 25% of the Merritt TSA. There are currently no Ungulate Winter Range designations in the Lakes and Morice TSAs.

Sustainability Risk:

- A reduction in Ungulate Winter Ranges would increase stress on these wildlife during sensitive life stages while contributing to habitat fragmentation and reduced connectivity. Elevated stress would contribute to diminished animal health and fitness, reduced juvenile recruitment, and would increase susceptibility to health-induced mortality and predation, with associated impacts on population stability.
- The primary limiting factor for deer populations in the Cariboo Region is the distribution and suitability of winter range. Even with designated winter ranges, winter conditions contributed to a reduction in deer populations of over 30% since 2006.
- Replacement of appropriate habitat would take a full rotation (e.g. more than 80 years in pine-dominated stands) while some habitat elements such as old Douglas Fir trees and lichen forage could take as much as 150 years.

Likelihood of Impact to users of the resource:

- Population levels could decrease, resulting in reduced hunter allocation and harvest, increased regulations, predator control and expensive animal transplants. Reduced area of suitable winter habitat would impact the abundance and distribution of ungulate species, which risks infringement of aboriginal rights.

Supporting Information:

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