

## **Caribou/Snowmobile Aerial Monitoring Report**

***Of February 15, 2013***

### **Methods**

The aerial monitoring program is conducted as a cooperative program between the Kalispel Tribe, the Defenders of Wildlife, and the Selkirk Conservation Alliance.

An aerial over-flight was conducted of the Southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou recovery area to monitor snowmobile user compliance with existing snowmobile use restrictions and to monitor and locate caribou and other important wildlife use areas in relation to areas with snowmobile use restrictions. To conduct aerial monitoring a Cessna 182 fixed wing type aircraft was utilized.

To accurately locate boundaries of areas with snowmobile use restrictions in place, a laptop computer running a geographical information-mapping program (Arc view ver. 3.3) was utilized. In addition to mapping software, the existing arc view extension, DNR gamin, was utilized to connect a handheld GPS system to computer for real-time mapping. In addition to a pilot, a single observer/recorder was utilized. Because of the conditions of the community airport at Priest River, the monitoring flight originated and ended at the community airport in Sandpoint, Idaho.

### **Conditions**

Weather conditions were clear within the very southern portion of the survey area with high cloud cover increasing low cover within the northern portion of the survey area. Temperature ranged about 25 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit within the survey area, no wind. The flight originated and concluded from the community airport in Sandpoint, Idaho. The flight began at approximately 1130 and ended at approximately 1430; total flight time was approximately 3.0 hours. A map of the flight path is shown in Figure 1.

### **Results**

#### ***Snowmobile Use***

Bunchgrass Meadows. Snowmobile use violation of existing closure was documented within small meadow located on the IPNF, directly east of the larger Bunchgrass Meadow on the Colville National Forest.

Molybdenite Mountain. Snowmobile tracks were observed on Molybdenite Mountain from the west end of ridge extending to approximately 1.5 miles east of that point. It appeared that access was from road system lower on slope to the south. Snowmobile use was also observed on most roads and created openings within Jungle Creek and Stimson Lands to the north of ridge.

Big Snowy Top. Snowmobile use was observed again on small lake to west of Big Snowy Mountain and within most of small basins north of this small lake. Access by snowmobiles was from adjacent road systems and border swath. Snowmobile tracks were observed on U.S. side of lake.

Continental Mine. Snowmobile use was observed at Continental Mine and snowmobile use extended north for approximately .5 miles into closure and south into closure towards Trapper Creek.

Trapper Creek. Snowmobile use was observed with Trapper Creek on IDL ownership that is open for use but a few tracks extended onto ridge between Trapper drainage and Grass Creek that is within closure. Snowmobile track also extended onto saddle between Trapper Creek and Cow Creek an into closure area.

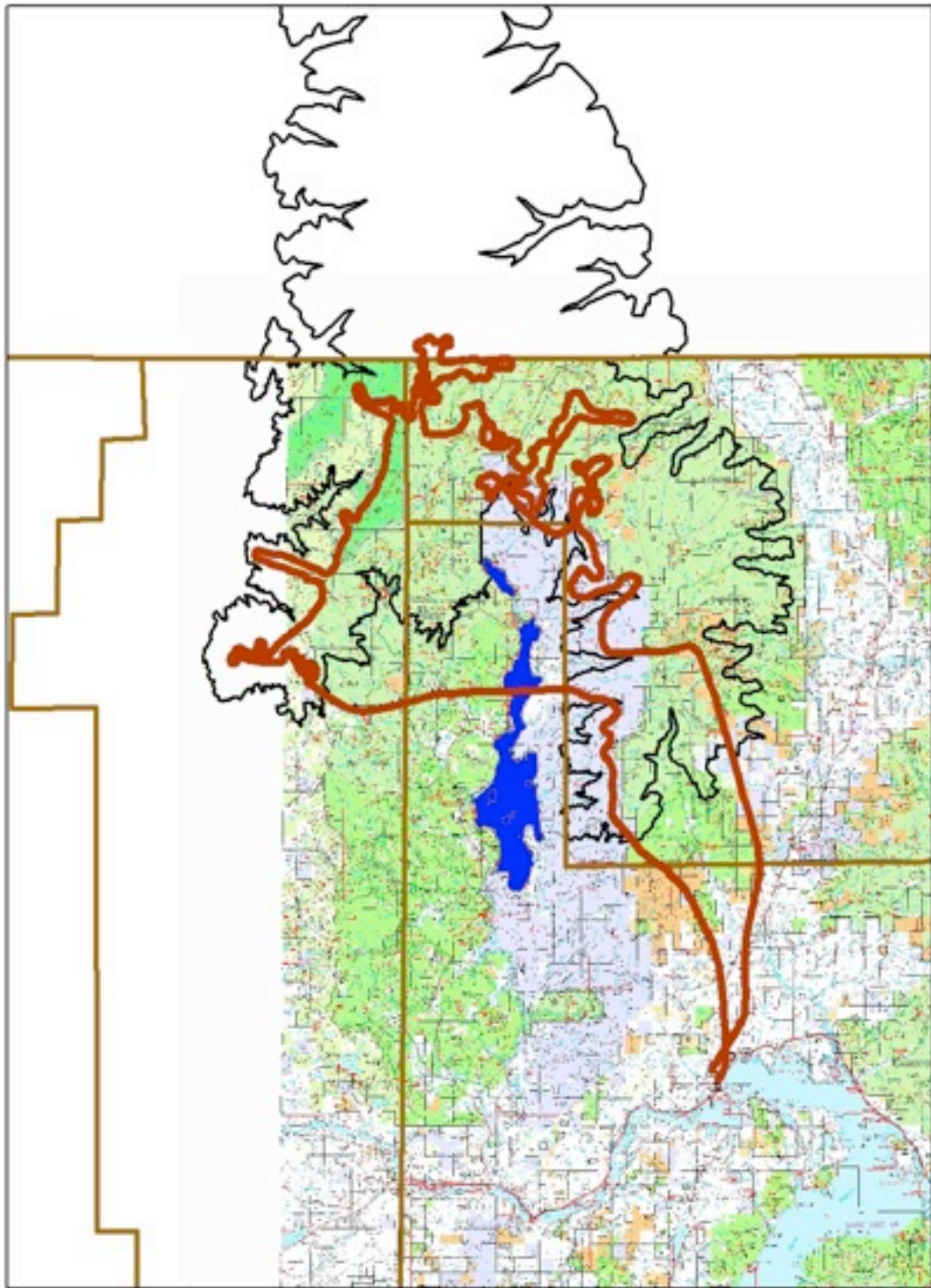
West Fork Cabin. Snowmobile use was observed around West Fork Cabin and use extended up the drainage to the south for several miles. Snowmobile use was within most of the open meadows and sparsely timbered areas.

Boundary Lake, B.C. Snowmobile use was observed north of the border on Boundary Lake.

### ***Wildlife***

Apparently snow conditions and weather conditions did not allow the detection of many wildlife tracks within the areas that could be viewed from the air. Although tracks of a single moose and tracks of two wolves were observed crossing Bunchgrass Meadow from east to west into timber. We were not able to see the outcome of this potential encounter because of time constraints and prevailing weather conditions. Through the remaining area that were surveyed only short segment of wildlife tracks were observed, no identification as to species was able to be determined from these short track segments. The lack of tracks was attributed to snow conditions (too hard and being wind blown) and weather conditions.

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*Figure 1. Map of southern portion of caribou recovery area, showing flight path (2/15/2013) taken in red.*



Photo of snowmobile tracks on Bunchgrass Meadow within closure



Photo of snowmobile tracks on lake that is west of Big Snowy Mountain.