

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

*Of March 25, 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 and moderate turbulence that diminished during the duration of the survey flight. Temperatures 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 1000 and ended at approximately 1430; total flight time was approximately 4.5 hours. A map of the flight path is shown in Figure 1.

### **Results**

**Standard lakes, Two Mouth Lakes, Harrison Peak.** Documented snowmobile/snow machine use violations of the closed areas at several locations. It appeared that four snowmachines (those single track bicycle snow machines) were into the closure at Two Mouth lake and Harrison Peak. they came in from around Standard Lakes after hitting almost everywhere in-between. After leaving Two Mouth Lakes they travel down the Wigwams and apparently back to their point of origin. Note....by what was observed, these sort of machines have the capability to traverse terrain what might be difficult for regular snow machines.

**Smith Creek.** Snow machine use was documented within the upper portion of Smith Creek along open and semi-open terrain, apparently gaining access via the road system.

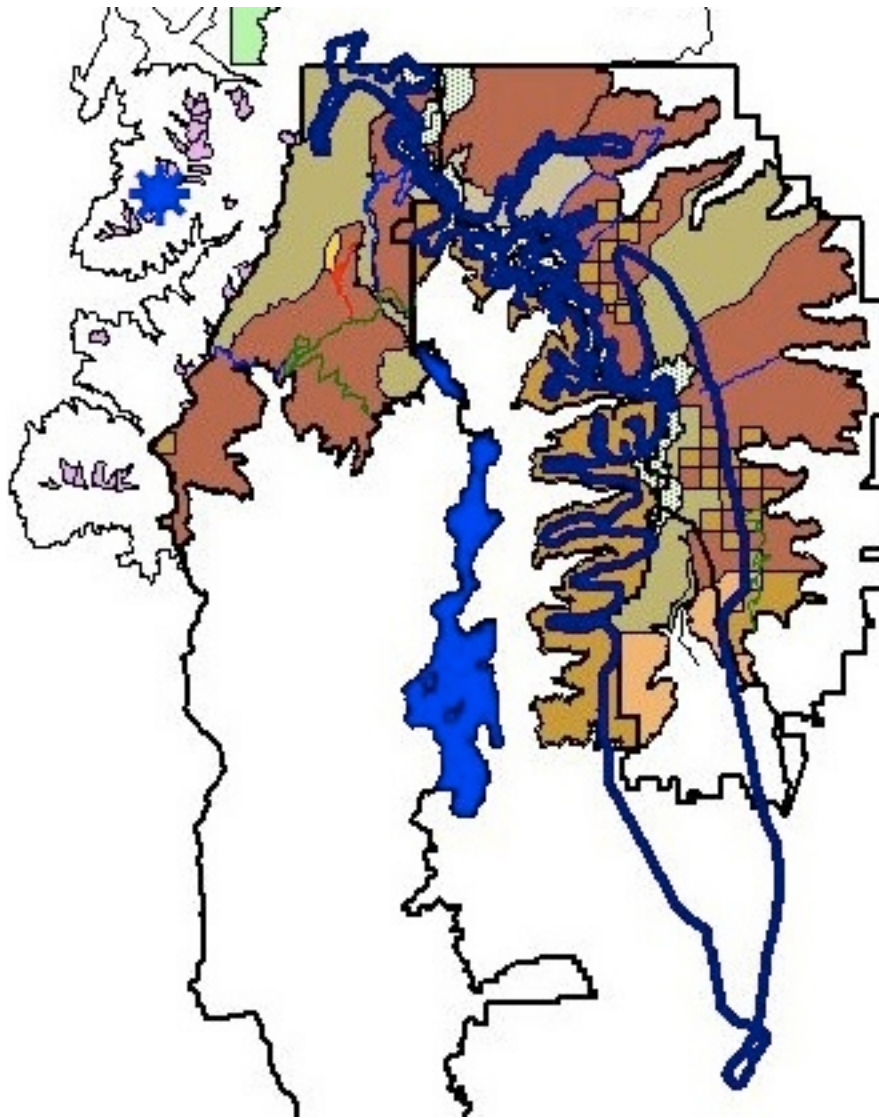
**Cow Creek, Phoebe's tip, Trapper Creek.** Snowmobile use was documented with the closed area in

headwaters of Cow Creek and all along ridge system from Phoebe's Tip to Trapper Peak and into the upper portion of Grass Creek.

### *Wildlife*

Also observed wolverine tracks at two locations, upper Smith Creek and Two Mouth Creek. Mountain goat tracks at several locations, snowshoe hare tracks almost everywhere and bear tracks originating from slightly southeast of Caribou Lakes and heading downslope into Caribou Creek after he (it) crossed and paused at some snowmobile tracks that were from the previous day. I am presuming that these were tracks of a grizzly bear given the location (den site) from where they originated.

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*Figure 1. Map of southern portion of caribou recovery area, showing flight path (3/25/2013) taken in blue.*



**Figure 2 Potential wolverine den site in Upper Smith Creek.**



**Figure 3 Bear (grizzly) tracks in vicinity of Caribou Lake.**