

# **Caribou/Snowmobile Aerial Monitoring Report**

***Of April 22, 2012***

## **Methods**

The aerial monitoring program is conducted as a cooperative program between the Advocacy of the West, the Defenders of Wildlife, the Idaho Conservation League, 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 with temperature being about 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit within the survey area, no wind. Weather had been clear for approximately two days prior to flight which flowed a period of cloud cover with occasional precipitation. The flight originated and concluded from the community airport in Sandpoint, Idaho. The flight began at approximately 1200 and ended at approximately 1530; total flight time was approximately 3.5 hours. A map of the flight path is shown in Figure 1.

## **Results**

### ***Snowmobile Use***

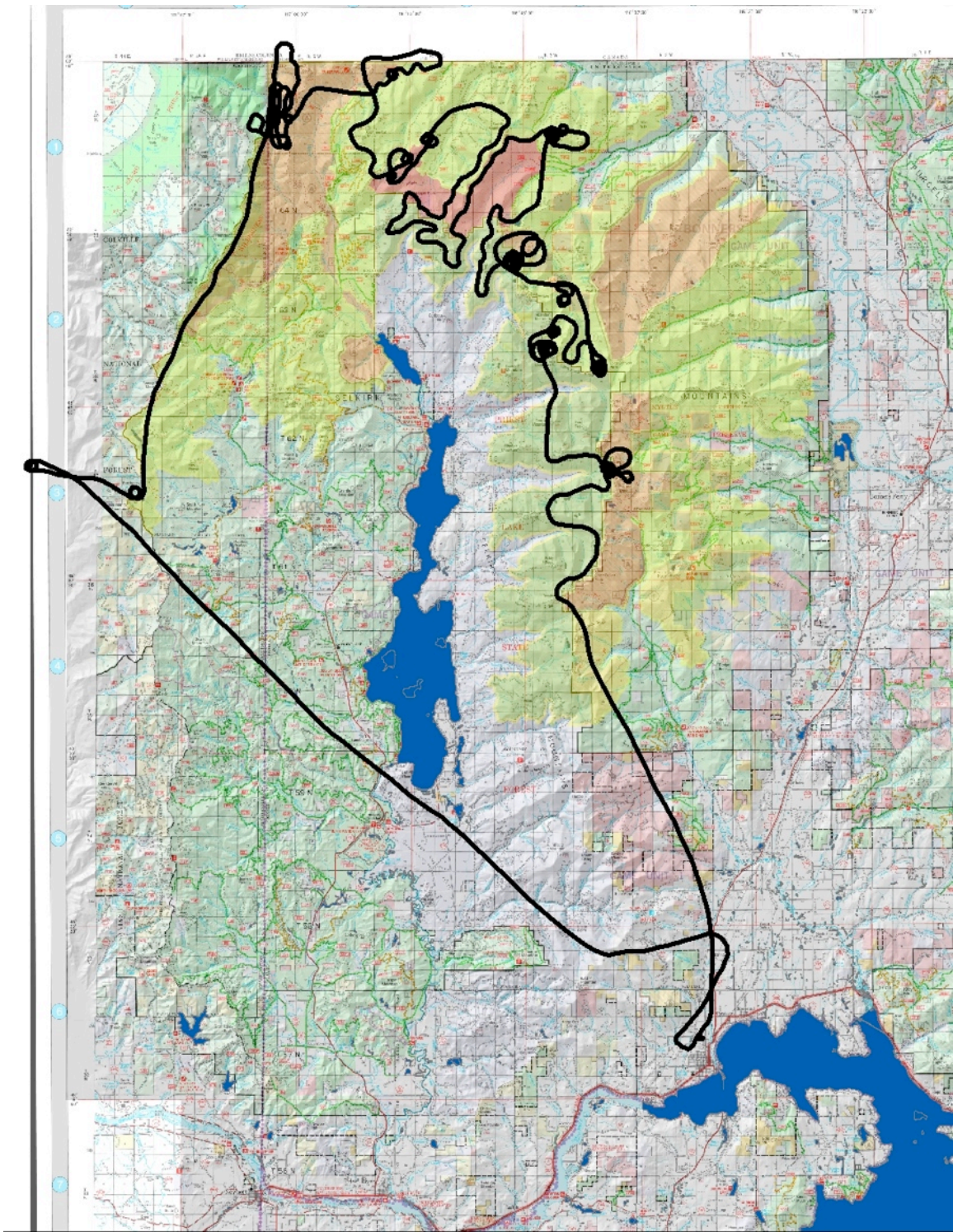
Snowmobile use within the surveyed area was generally restricted to the upper elevations (mid slopes to ridge tops). Snowmobile use violations were observed at several locations including: Two Mouth Lakes area where it appeared that snowmobilers gained access from the Myrtle Creek drainage, some high-markings was also observed below the bench of Two Mouth lakes to the east along some open slopes. Snowmobile tracks were observed within the upper portion of Smith Creek; from following the snowmobile tracks it speared that the snowmobilers came into the upper portion of Smith Creek by tracking

around Lions head Ridge from Abandon Creek drainage. Snowmobile tracks were observed within the upper reaches of Grass Creek, and Blue Joe Creek, where access was likely from the Trapper Creek area on IDL lands. Snowmobile tracks were observed on Bunchgrass Meadows and Molybdenite Ridge on the Colville National Forest. Snowmobile tracks were observed on the small lake (U.S. side) on to the west of Big Snowy Mtn. within the Crutch Creek Drainage, where access was from British Columbia along the international border.

### ***Wildlife***

Bear tracks were seen on the upper slopes of north side of Shorty Peak and Green Bonnet Mountain. Older Caribou tracks were seen near Little Snowy Top but it appeared that the animals may have moved into the thicker timber downslope towards the Washington State line. Possible wolverine tracks were also observed within the Smith Creek drainage.

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**Figure 1. Flight path of April 22, 2012, shown in black.**





**Figure 2. Snowmobile tracks in Upper Smith Creek.**



**Figure 3. Snowmobile tracks in Two Mouth Lakes area.**

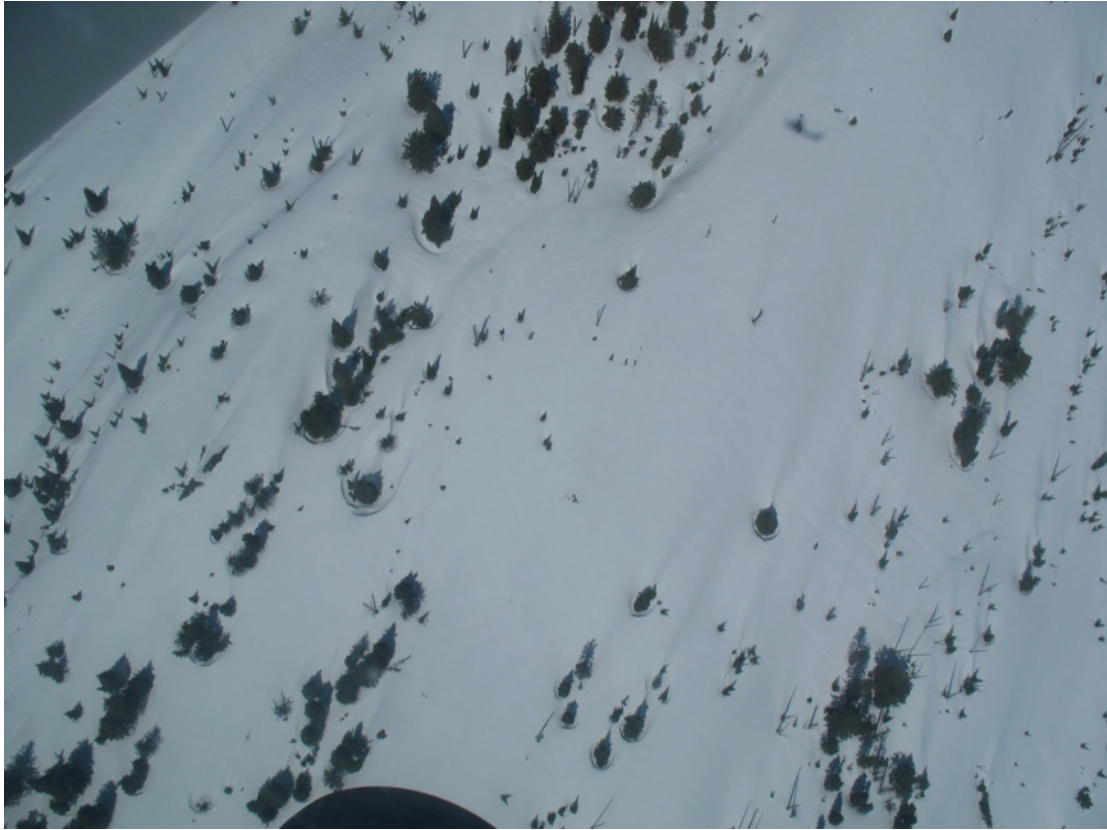


**Figure 4. Snowmobile tracks on Molybdenite Mountain.**



**Figure 5. Bear tracks on north side of Shorty Peak.**





**Figure 6. Bear tracks on north side of Green Bonnet Mountain.**