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NEWS

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International Porcupine Caribou Board Concludes International Meeting

The International Porcupine Caribou Board (Board) concluded meetings on Wednesday, September 18, 2013, including an evening event with local communities and other stakeholders where the Board heard comments on the conservation of the Porcupine caribou.

During their meetings, the Board adopted an interim communications strategy that considers social media while recognizing that radio is still the way to get the message out to some communities. The Board compared harvest management plans in the United States (U.S.) State of Alaska and Canada, heard an update on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, and discussed potential developments in both countries that may impact the Porcupine caribou herd.

According to Geoff Haskett, Alaska Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Board Co-chair, the meeting gave Board members a much clearer perspective on their ongoing challenges and opportunities for improving international cooperation. "I was impressed by the positive interactions of our two delegations," Haskett noted. "It's gratifying to see two countries come together in such a productive way over something as valuable as the shared Porcupine caribou herd resource."

"We are pleased to continue the constructive dialogue," added Barry Smith, Regional Director of the Canadian Wildlife Service, Pacific and Yukon Region and Canadian Co-chair of the Board. "The meetings are an opportunity to further the work of the Board in conserving the herd and its habitat on both sides of the border."

The Porcupine caribou herd is the fifth largest herd of migratory caribou in North America. It roams over approximately 250,000 km² or 96,526 mi² of Northern Alaska, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. These caribou are the primary subsistence resource of the Gwich'in Alaska Native people, who traditionally built their communities based upon the caribou's migration patterns. The animals are also an important traditional resource for other native peoples, including the Inupiat, Inuvialuit, Hän, and Northern Tutchone.

Eighty-five percent of the Porcupine caribou harvest occurs in Canada, requiring the development of much more responsive protocols and procedures for caribou management in Canada than in the U.S. In

the U.S., the herd's relative inaccessibility has so far limited hunting opportunities and development pressures.

The objectives of the board are to conserve the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat through international cooperation and coordination, ensure opportunities for customary and traditional uses, enable users of Porcupine caribou to participate in the international coordination of the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd and to encourage cooperation and communication among governments, users of Porcupine Caribou and others to achieve these objectives.

The Board will meet again by teleconference/videoconference in April, 2014.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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