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International Porcupine Caribou Board Concludes International Meeting

The International Porcupine Caribou Board (Board) today concluded its meetings in Fairbanks, Alaska, including an evening open house with local community members and other stakeholders where the Board heard comments on the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd.

During their meetings, the Board discussed development of a three-year report, and possible website development for internal and external sharing of information. The Board also heard a presentation on photo-census techniques for caribou from the Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee and other updates from the technical committee on harvest management planning and development of a new work plan for the Committee.

Geoff Haskett, Alaska Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Board Co-chair, welcomed the Board's newest member Mr. Douglas Vincent-Lang, Director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation at the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game; "I was pleased by the Governor's nomination and the Secretary of the Interior's appointment of Mr. Vincent-Lang to the Board." Haskett noted "I look forward to working with him on this international Board to help meet our Conservation agreement with Canada for the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd".

"It is encouraging to see the level of commitment and engagement by the Board on conserving this shared resource" added Barry Smith, Regional Director of the Canadian Wildlife Service, Pacific and Yukon Region and Canadian Co-chair of the Board. "I am very pleased with the progress the Board and its technical committee have made following our meeting last year in Dawson City, Yukon."

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. With the 2013 census showing the herd's increased population of over 197,000, ongoing scientific research and monitoring will inform management decisions and continue to help in the herd's conservation.

Eighty-five percent of the Porcupine caribou harvest occurs in Canada, which has resulted in a cooperative management framework being adopted by First Nations and governments responsible for making decisions within the herd's range. In the U.S., the herd's relative inaccessibility has so far limited hunting and development pressures.

The objectives of the Board are to conserve the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat through international cooperation and coordination, to ensure opportunities for customary and traditional uses, to 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 next by teleconference/videoconference in April 2015.

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