

CARIBOU

Concern

The Tatchun caribou herd is small, heavily harvested, and should be managed carefully.

This caribou herd is about 500 animals and ranges to the north of Carmacks (Figure 8). An outfitter harvests animals from this herd based on a negotiated quota, and resident hunters harvest an average of 3 each year. Given the small size of the herd, it is important to monitor any changes in the size and range use of the herd. Recruitment of young animals into the herd has generally been good during the past 10 years, but the sex ratio (number of bulls compared to the number of cows) is fairly low, suggesting that harvest levels are high. Winter range has been greatly reduced with wildfires in 1969, 1995, and 1998, but the animals are still in good physical condition and show no signs of stress from the effect of fires on their range.

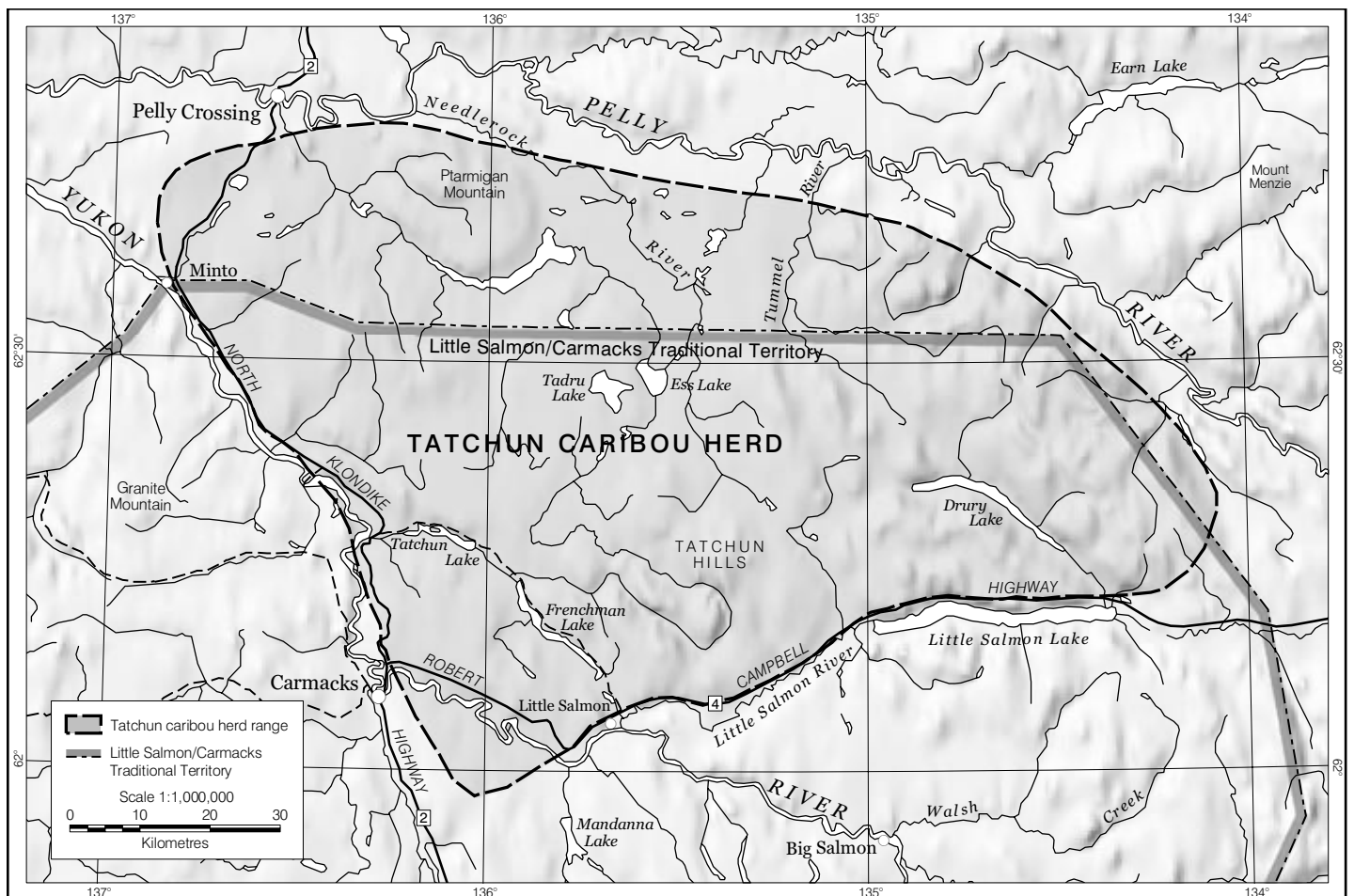


Figure 8. Tatchun caribou herd range.

Solution Carefully monitor size and composition (percentages of calves, bulls and cows) of the Tatchun caribou herd, ensure safe harvest rates and protect its remaining winter range from fire.

Commitment

By who? By when?

YTG, LSCFN
2006

Count the Tatchun caribou herd. [15]

The Tatchun herd has been counted only once before, in 2000. Biologists want to count herds with special management concerns about every five years, so the Tatchun herd should be counted soon. It has been difficult to get funding to do these counts, and weather and snow conditions are not always reliable for rut season counts. The plan needs to be flexible about when the count happens. Information about herd size is important to establish sustainable harvest limits by all users, including outfitter quotas. YTG will cover the cost of the survey, and LSCFN will participate on the survey.

YTG, LSCFN
2004-2009

Continue monitoring Tatchun caribou herd composition in fall. [16]

YTG has been monitoring the annual composition of calves, cows, and bulls in the Tatchun herd each fall during the rut as part of routine studies. YTG will cover the cost of the monitoring surveys, and LSCFN will participate.

YTG, LSCFN, CRRC
2004-2009

Monitor all harvest of the Tatchun caribou herd. [17]

There is an open harvest of this herd and resident licensed hunters take about 3 each year. The non-resident harvest is based on quota of 7 bulls, which will be need to be re-negotiated between the outfitter and the CRRC in 2004, to ensure that it remains within sustainable limits. The number of bulls compared to cows is fairly low, and the bull harvest is probably near the upper limit of what the herd can sustain. Monitoring all harvest is critical, and LSCFN is currently working to design a harvest-monitoring program. LSCFN needs to be sensitive to interest of elders and needs to go slowly and carefully to collect reliable information, but understands the importance of collecting harvest information for sustainable harvesting. Selkirk First Nation also hunts the Tatchun herd, and information on harvest is collected each year for the Northern Tutchone May Gathering.

CRRC, YTG, LSCFN
2004

Recommend that the Tatchun herd winter range be protected as part of a fire management plan. [18]

If the remaining winter range is burned, it could be bad for the herd (Figure 9). If it burned in a wet year, it may prevent all of it going quickly. If it burned in a dry year, it could remove most of the remaining winter range around Tatchun and Frenchman Lakes. There should be a formal recommendation to Fire Management staff that the winter range needs to be protected through the development of a fire management plan for the area.

Concern

Any increase in permits for the Klaza caribou herd will lead to more hunters and disturbance.

The Klaza caribou herd that ranges west of Carmacks (Figure 10) has increased in numbers since the mid-1990s and the herd now has at least 700 animals. In 2002, permits for resident hunters were raised from six permits to 12 permits. There was concern expressed that any additional increase in permits would bring more hunters into the Mount Nansen area, potentially disturbing not only this herd, but also other wildlife in the area.

Solution **Manage harvest of the Klaza caribou herd to minimize disturbance and monitor hunter activity in this range.**

While this concern relates to the broader concerns about the impacts of access in the Mount Nansen area, there is a specific need to understand the impact of the current harvest activity on the Klaza caribou herd.

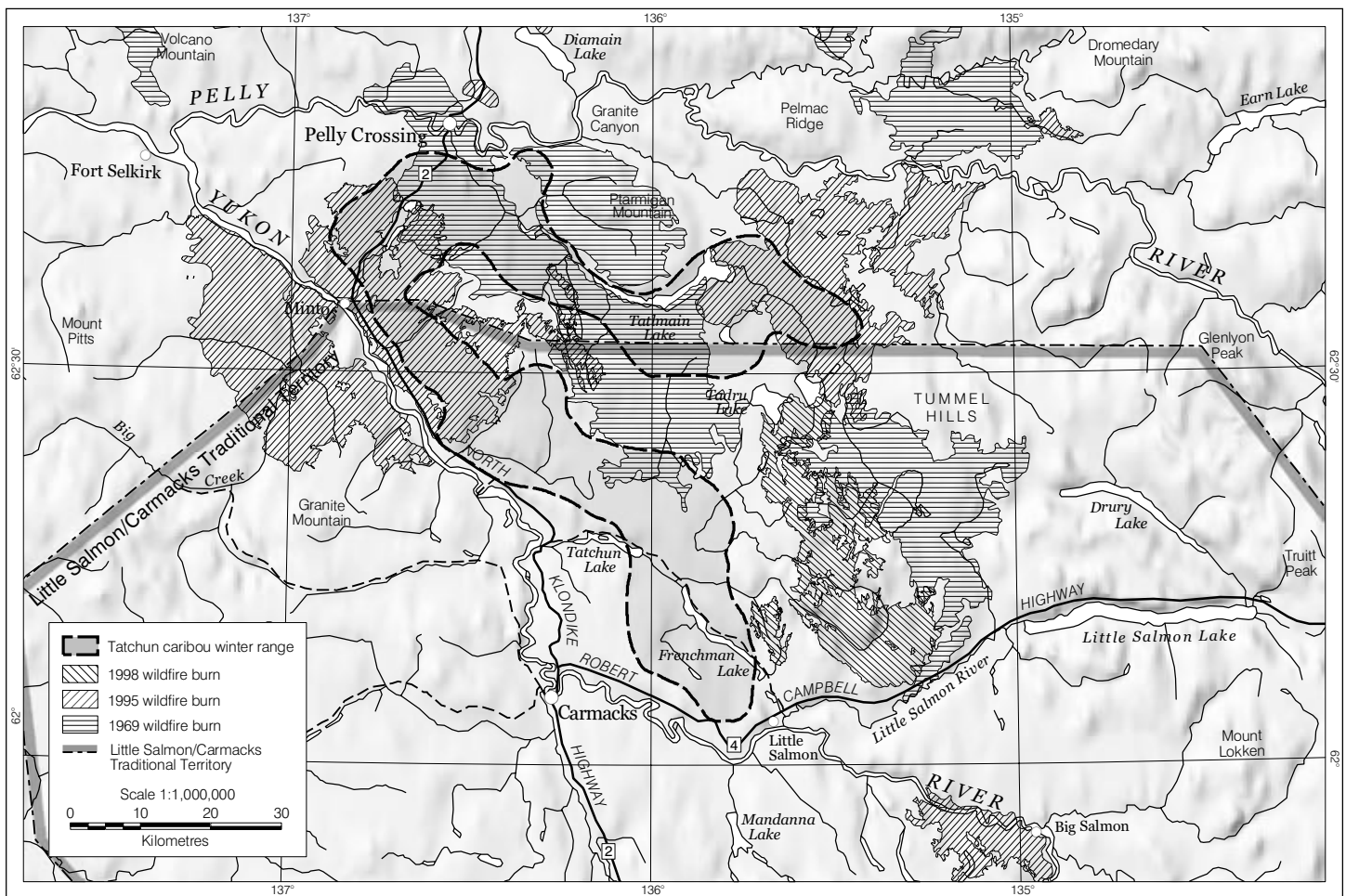


Figure 9. Wildfires in the winter range of the Tatchun caribou herd from 1969 to 2003.