



## Porcupine Caribou Management Board

# News Release

January 17, 2025

**The Porcupine Caribou Management Board continues to support the position of Canadian Parties that oil and gas development should not proceed in the Porcupine Caribou herd's calving and post-calving grounds in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Board is relieved that the recent lease sale received no bids from energy companies.**

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) continues to recommend and support the full protection of the herd's calving and post-calving grounds in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge despite the attempts to establish oil and gas leases in some of these critical habitats.

The Parties to the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* in Canada include the governments of Canada, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Vuntut Gwitchin, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dun, the Gwich'in Tribal Council, and the Inuvialuit Game Council. The PCMB has worked with its Parties on this issue since passage of the Trump Administration's 2017 *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*, which mandated that two lease sales of at minimum 400,000 acres occur in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge prior to December 22, 2024.

Today, the Porcupine Caribou herd is one of the largest migratory caribou herds in the world. Almost all other large migratory herds in Canada and elsewhere remain near historic lows caused by changes in their habitats brought on by climate change, industrial disturbances, and in some cases, unsustainable harvesting. The success of the Porcupine Caribou herd can in part be attributed to the strong domestic and international commitment and collaboration between the PCMB, its Canadian parties, and American federal and state agencies. The development of oil and gas leases within critical habitats would jeopardize the health and conservation of this important herd and the people who rely on this herd traditionally, culturally, and for subsistence purposes.

The PCMB was pleased to learn that Alaska's Bureau of Land Management did not receive any bids for the congressionally mandated oil and gas lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, thereby maintaining the integrity of the entire calving and post-calving grounds necessary for the long-term conservation of the Porcupine Caribou herd and the many other species that depend on it.

## Quotes

“We recognize that the new alternative selected in the Record of Decision and used in the recent lease sale is a dramatic improvement from past alternatives. The Board, however, continues to support the position of Canadian Parties that protection of the entire critical calving and post-calving grounds is necessary to sustain the Porcupine Caribou herd in the face of the many pressures that the herd is experiencing, including significant climate-induced changes within its range.” — Joe Tetlich, PCMB Chair

“Although there were no bids received from oil companies in response to the recent lease sale, we know this issue is far from over. The Board remains committed to working with the Parties of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* on the protection and conservation of important habitats within the range of the herd and ensuring that the cultural and subsistence needs of the Indigenous people who rely on the herd continue to be met.” — Joe Tetlich, PCMB Chair

## Background:

- On December 22, 2017 the Trump Administration passed the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* which mandates two lease sales in the Arctic Refuge’s coastal plain for oil and gas development.
- The US Bureau of Land Management completed an initial Environmental Impact Statement and held a lease sale by January 6, 2021. A total of nine leases were sold to bidders. Canadian Parties together with the PCMB participated throughout this process and provided substantial analyses and feedback to the US Administration on significant deficiencies and flaws found in this process.
- On his first day in office, President Biden signed an Executive Order which placed a temporary moratorium on all oil and natural gas leasing activities in the Refuge, and in June 2021, the Department of Interior suspended the leases in the Refuge pending a comprehensive analysis of environmental impacts.
- Two private lease holders cancelled their leases before the Department of Interior cancelled the remaining 7 leases. The Department identified that the 2021 lease sale was seriously flawed and contained a number of legal deficiencies.
- To address legal deficiencies, a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) was released on November 6, 2024. The SEIS included new information, development alternatives, operating standards and lease stipulations. A Record of Decision which chooses the final options and then enables a lease sale was released on December 8, 2024.
- The Bureau of Land Management held the second oil and gas lease sale with a bid deadline of January 9, 2025; however, no bids were received.
- Partners of the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*, including the governments of Canada, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Vuntut Gwitchin, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, the First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dun, the Gwich’in Tribal Council, and

the Inuvialuit Game Council, have stated that drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not sustainable for the long-term health of the Porcupine Caribou herd and remain committed to the goal of permanent protection for the sacred calving grounds for Porcupine Caribou in this region of Alaska.

- Last summer, delegates of the Gwich'in Nation from Alaska and Canada met in *Danzhit Hanlaji* (Circle) Alaska for the Biennial Gwich'in Gathering to unanimously reaffirm a resolution calling for protections for *lizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins), the birthplace and nursery grounds of the Porcupine Caribou herd. The resolution calls for the United States Congress to recognize the human rights of the Gwich'in by permanently protecting the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Management of the Porcupine Caribou herd is guided by several pieces of legislation, including the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* (an annex to the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* added in 1985), and the *International Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America on the Conservation of Porcupine Caribou* (1987).
- The PCMB was created through the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* and is mandated to recommend measures that ensure the conservation and protection of habitat specifically where projects, plans or activities may impede, delay or disrupt the herd or its habitat, of use by First Nation or Inuvialuit users. The PCMB Chair also participates as a permanent member on the International Porcupine Caribou Board.
- The goal of the PCMB is to implement collaborative management of federal, territorial, First Nation, and Inuvialuit government interests in the Porcupine Caribou herd. The PCMB is the primary instrument in Canada for implementing a co-management approach for the herd based on scientific research and traditional knowledge. The PCMB and its Parties are responsible for the ongoing implementation of its Harvest Management Plan, regular communication with the Parties and their user communities, and providing significant guidance to land use planning and environmental assessment within the Canadian range of the herd.

More details may be found at [www.thelastgreatherd.com](http://www.thelastgreatherd.com) and [www.pcmb.ca](http://www.pcmb.ca) and on the PCMB's social media platforms:



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**CONTACT: Deana Lemke**  
Executive Director, PCMB  
[dlemke@pcmb.ca](mailto:dlemke@pcmb.ca)  
867-633-4780