



Mr. Michael Neyelle
Chair
?ehdzo Got'ine? Gots'é Nákedi
Sahtu Renewable Resources Board
PO BOX 124
TULITA NT X0E OK0

FEB 22 2017

Dear Mr. Neyelle:

**Toward a Visionary Cross-Regional
Approach to Caribou Conservation in the NWT**

Thank you for your letter of December 14, 2016 entitled "*Toward a Visionary Cross-Regional approach to Caribou Conservation in the NWT*". The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) has carefully considered the recommendations put forward by the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) in this letter, as well as a number of other discussions and formal processes that have been held over the past year on the management of Bluenose-East (BNE) caribou.

I have been encouraged by the broad commitment to conservation and wise use of this shared resource shown by different jurisdictions, wildlife co-management boards, Aboriginal governments and organizations, and communities. In addition to formal public hearings held in the Sahtú, Wek'èezhìi and Nunavut in 2016, there were a number of cross-regional meetings and other forums to share information, perspectives, and ideas on shared conservation goals and approaches for the herd.

In the Sahtú, the community of Délıne? and ENR submitted separate but complementary proposals on BNE management to the SRRB, reflecting shared concerns and a desire to work together in a way that takes into account the best interests of the herd and the values of the communities that depend on it. Evidence presented at the public hearings held by the SRRB in March 2016 clearly demonstrated a conservation concern for the BNE herd, and highlighted the importance of a local community-based approach within a larger herd-wide management and conservation framework. ENR shares this view, and reiterates its support for the Délıne? plan.

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As highlighted in your letter, a community-based approach will help foster community support and voluntary compliance for conservation measures, and is consistent with the spirit and approach to co-management laid out in the *Sahtú Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*. ENR has and will continue to work closely with Délı̄ne to help support and implement their plan.

ENR also believes that this community-based approach is consistent with the need to consider how much harvest the overall herd can currently sustain (based on traditional, local and scientific knowledge). One of the strengths of our co-management system is the ability to creatively combine these (and other) approaches to provide a Northern-made approach to address Northern wildlife issues.

ENR will support regional differences in approaches that contribute to shared conservation goals for the herd, and which are respectful and fair to all co-management partners. Délı̄ne's plan and the community-driven approaches it has proposed can bring important regional context and innovative approaches to conservation planning for the herd, while supporting overall herd-wide conservation goals and approaches that protect the goals of all traditional users. ENR also recognizes that the SRRB has reserved the right to consider a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for the BNE herd in the event that the Délı̄ne plan is not successful.

On September 26, 2016, ENR submitted a written response to the final report and recommendations from the SRRB. Since that time, it has also consulted with other traditional users of the Bluenose-East caribou herd, and met with the community of Délı̄ne, Tłı̄chǫ Government, SRRB and WRRB in December 2016 to listen further to what they had to say.

Based on what we have heard, ENR reaffirms the decisions and responses outlined in our September 26, 2016 letter to the SRRB, with the following modifications:

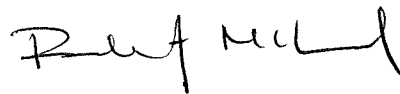
- As outlined in the Délı̄ne plan, the harvest of BNE caribou for the Sahtú Settlement Area will be 150 caribou, including harvest by Délı̄ne and other Sahtú communities whether it occurs in the Sahtú Settlement Area or elsewhere.

- ENR strongly encourages the SRRB and Délı̄nę to work towards a minimal harvest of the breeding cows that are critical to herd stabilization and recovery. ENR recognizes the challenges and progress in shifting the harvest to primarily bulls, and would like to work with the community of Délı̄nę and the SRRB to work towards an all bull harvest while the herd remains in its current precarious state.

I would also like to note that the next population survey for this herd is planned for June 2018 and thereafter management actions for this herd will be re-assessed by all parties, including the SRRB and Délı̄nę.

I would like to thank the SRRB for their efforts in working with the community of Délı̄nę, other Sahtú communities, ENR and other co-management partners to help protect and conserve the Bluenose-East caribou herd for future generations.

Sincerely,



Robert C. McLeod
Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

- c. The Honourable Robert R. McLeod, Premier
Mr. Gary Bohnet, Principal Secretary, Office of the Premier
Mr. Raymond Tutcho, ʔekw'atı̄dé (Chief), Délı̄nę Got'ı̄nę Government
Mr. Russell Kenny, Vice President, Délı̄nę ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nę, RRC
Mr. George Barnaby, Vice Chair, ʔehdzo Got'ı̄nę Gots'é Nákedı̄, SRRB
Ms. Deborah Simmons, Executive Director, SRRB
Dr. Erin Kelly, Acting Deputy Minister, ENR
Ms. Shaleen Woodward, Acting Deputy Minister
Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations
Mr. Fred Mandeville, Assistant Deputy Minister Operations, ENR
Dr. Brett Elkin, Acting Director of Wildlife Division, ENR
Mr. Bruno Croft, Acting Superintendent, North Slave Region, ENR
Mr. Jeff Walker, Superintendent, Sahtú Region, ENR

