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## Minister's Response to Sahtú Renewable Resources Board's Bluenose East ʔekwé Report

**Tuesday, September 27, 2016 — Tulıt'a, NWT** — Yesterday the NWT Minister of Environment and Natural Resources affirmed the community-based conservation planning approach to caribou management in a mostly positive response to the report on the Sahtú Bluenose East ʔekwé (Caribou) Hearing. This marks the first time that a conservation plan led by local indigenous communities – and relying on traditional indigenous conservation systems – is being accepted in principle for caribou management in Canada.

The ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'é Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) released the Bluenose East Hearing Report, *ʔekwé' hé Dene Ts'ııı - Sustaining Relationships*, a month ago. The Minister has now completed his initial review and response. In a letter including point-by-point responses to the 39 decisions in the Board's Hearing Report on conservation measures for the Bluenose East herd, Minister Robert C. McLeod accepted many of the Board's decisions. However, he also asked the Board to consider varying several of its decisions.

On March 1-3 of this year, the Board held a public hearing to review proposed plans for Bluenose East ʔekwé management submitted by the GNWT and by the community of Délıne, the primary harvester of the Bluenose East herd in the Sahtú Region. After considering the evidence, the board made a number of decisions on measures to support the health of the Bluenose East herd, including a decision to accept Délıne's community-based conservation planning approach.

The Minister supports, in principle, the decision to accept the community ʔedets'é K'áots'erewe (self-regulation) approach as a culturally appropriate and effective mechanism for addressing Bluenose East ʔekwé conservation. The Minister notes that this approach is relatively new and that its effectiveness needs to be monitored and adapted as needed.

While accepting the overall approach put forward by the Board, the Minister has asked the Board to vary the following key decisions on harvest:

- The Minister asks the Board to consider a proposed Bluenose East harvest for the Sahtú Settlement Area of 129 BNE ʔekwé (rather than the 150 that Délıne had proposed as a ceremonial harvest for its community). The Minister's request is based on the Wek'èezhıı Renewable Resources Board's recent decision that the herd-wide harvest across all regions should be 750 rather than the 950 ʔekwé for conservation reasons.

- The Minister asks the Board to consider a maximum harvest of five tsída (females), rather than the Board's original decision for a majority yárégo (bull) harvest with 20% tsída (female) harvest for ceremonial and cultural purposes.

The Board will work with the Déljñę community (whose community conservation planning approach both the Board and the Minister have now accepted in principle) to review the Minister's response. By October 26, the Board will issue its reply to the Minister's requests to vary several of the Board's decisions.

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