

Summary of

Sahtú Information from Community Engagements for Bluenose Caribou Management Planning



Background

In January 2007, a barren-ground “Caribou Summit” was held in Inuvik, NT, with representation from caribou user groups and Aboriginal governments across the NWT and parts of Nunavut. The goal was to identify priorities for action to help caribou herds recover from declines. One of the top priorities identified by users was the need for an updated Management Plan.

In 2008, the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM) was established to “exchange information, help develop cooperation and consensus and make recommendations regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat issues that cross land claim and treaty boundaries.” The ACCWM¹ consists of the Chairpersons (or alternate appointees) of:

- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
- Gwich’in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB)
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- Wek’èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB)
- Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB), and
- Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board (TNNPMB).

The ACCWM decided to develop a plan for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds to address management issues over the long term. The ACCWM formed a working group to help develop the plan, made up of representatives of:

- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
- Gwich’in Renewable Resources Board
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- Wek’èezhìi Renewable Resources Board
- Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board
- Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Association
- Dehcho First Nations
- Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board
- Tłı̨chǫ Government

¹ The Dehcho First Nations organization is part of the Working Group. There is an outstanding invitation for them to join the ACCWM. The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board was a member of the ACCWM from 2008-2014 but withdrew as a member before completion of the Management Plan.

- Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), GNWT
- Department of the Environment, Government of Nunavut
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), and
- Parks Canada.

Between 2007 and 2013, meetings to gather information for the Management Plan were held in the following regions and communities:

- Inuvialuit Settlement Region – Tuktokyaktuk, Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk
- Gwich'in Settlement Area – Aklavik, Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson
- Sahtú Settlement Area – Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells, Tulít'a, Déljñę
- Wek' èzhii (Tłjchq Region) – Gamètì, Whatì, Behchokò
- Dehcho Region – Wrigley (Pedzeh Ki First Nation), Fort Simpson (Liidlíi Kue First Nation)
- Kitikmeot Region – Kugluktuk.

The Management Plan was drafted using community input received during three main 'Rounds' of engagement. Each member/Board represented at the Working Group decided how the meetings and engagement would take place in their region, and so the process differed somewhat from region to region.

Sahtú Settlement Area Engagement Details

Round 1 community engagements were held in Norman Wells, Tulít'a, Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, and Déljñę in December 2009. The objectives of the meetings were:

- To review the current status of the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East herds of barren-ground caribou;
- To hear people's concerns and opinions as to what is happening with barren-ground caribou in the GSA; and
- To discuss what people would like to have included in a Management Plan for the herds.

A summary report was produced with information documented during these meetings.²

Only one **Round 2** community engagement occurred in the Sahtú. This was a public meeting held in Déljñę in March 2011, to develop a Management Plan for the herds. Comments were recorded during the meeting and provided to the ACCWM and the Working Group.

Round 3 engagements took place in Tulít'a, Colville Lake, Déljñę, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells between August and October 2011. These meetings were public meetings held by ENR to review the revised or second draft Management Plan. ENR also did presentations and held discussions in five schools of the Sahtú to engage high school students. Comments were recorded during all meetings and provided to the ACCWM and the Working Group.

² Developing a Management Plan for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East Barren-Ground Caribou Herds: Summary of phase 1 community engagements in the Sahtú Settlement Area. December 2009. Available from ACCWM members.

During **Round 3**, the revised draft was also released for public review online and in public meetings hosted by Environment and Natural Resources. It was distributed directly to over 100 key audiences in the NWT that included Aboriginal governments and organizations in non-land claim areas, resident harvesters, as well as other interested parties. After this last stage of review, the plan was finalized by the Working Group, and submitted to the ACCWM for review and approval.

Resulting Management Planning Documents

The Management Plan was approved in November 2014. It is called “*Taking Care of Caribou: the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou Herds Management Plan*”. It describes:

- Principles and goals for taking care of the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East caribou herds;
- The need for a plan and the importance of working together;
- Current population estimates and trends;
- Roles and responsibilities of the wildlife management boards and agencies;
- Information required to effectively take care of the herds;
- How to make management decisions that can impact herds;
- A framework for determining what management actions should be taken; and
- How to communicate with communities, harvesters, youth, and others.

Two companion documents support the Management Plan. One is a *Technical Report* produced by ENR that contains the most current scientific information on the herds and their status. The other is a Community Report called “*We have been living with the caribou all our lives*”. It contains information documented during the community engagement done to develop the Plan.

A lot of information was documented during community engagement in the Sahtú. It is included in the Community Report, along with that from all other regions. It has also been isolated and is available as its own separate report from the SRRB. Here, we present a summary table of the main messages or key themes that came up during the meetings in the Sahtú communities. Much more detailed information can be found either in the Community Report or in the report of Sahtu-specific information only.

Table of Sahtú Settlement Area Themes

<i>Section 1: Have you seen any changes in the herds?</i>	
<i>A. Changes in Caribou Population, Distribution and Migrations</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were differing perspectives about whether caribou numbers were declining 2. Caribou distribution and migration changed in some areas 3. Caribou returned after industrial activity stopped 4. Fewer caribou were being harvested 5. Caribou moved away from some Sahtú communities and some areas so people weren't seeing them as much 6. Changes in cycles or caribou distribution can be in response to things such as industrial activity or changing weather patterns 7. As development has stopped, caribou have been coming back to their former areas 8. Caribou naturally cycle in abundance 9. Caribou arrived two weeks later in the fall than in the past 10. More people in Déljñę were harvesting caribou.
<i>B. Changes in Predators</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wolf numbers increased and pack sizes were large 2. Wolf predation was the biggest issue for caribou 3. May need to consider predator bounties and incentives.
<i>C. Changes in Environment</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weather has changed 2. Climate change has impacted caribou habitat and behaviour 3. It is necessary to look after the environment and caribou habitat better

	4. Forest fires have impacted caribou habitat – once an area is burned it takes a long time for lichen to grow back.
<i>D. Changes in Development</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were concerns about many types of industrial development and activity that have impacted caribou 2. Impacts are direct (e.g., helicopters, noise, pollution, etc.) and indirect (e.g., impacts to caribou habitat).
<i>E. Changes in Competitors</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Muskox directly competed with caribou by eating their food 2. When muskox moved in to new areas, predators also moved in and caribou moved out 3. Muskox destroy lichen – they paw it down so it doesn't grow back.
<i>F. Changes in Caribou Health and Physical Condition</i>	One comment only – “The caribou are not as fat now.” (Déljñę)
<i>Section 2: What changes how you harvest caribou?</i>	
<i>A. Harvest Traditions and Timing</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harvesting did not traditionally target just bulls but a mix of bulls and cows depending on season, location and condition of the caribou 2. It was important to keep a balance of bulls and cows.
<i>B. Meeting Needs and Sharing</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Traditionally, people just took what they needed and hunted when caribou were close to communities 2. There were mixed impressions about whether people were harvesting more or less caribou

	3. People need to work on mechanisms for respectful harvesting and sharing.
<i>C. Harvest Regulations</i>	Two question/comments only – how can they tell BNW and BNE caribou apart when harvesting? How will tags work and be affected by land claim rights?
<i>D. Cost and Distance of the Harvest</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People were not harvesting as much 2. People mostly harvested when the caribou were close to the communities.
<i>E. Conservation Concerns and Ease of Access</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need to adjust actions to protect caribou 2. Skidoos and ATVs made it easier to hunt 3. Roads increased access in some areas.
<i>Section 3: What information is needed for management? How can your knowledge be best used in management?</i>	
<i>A. Traditional Knowledge and Harvesting Practices</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a long relationship between caribou and people, based on respect 2. Traditional knowledge and practices have played an important role in sustaining caribou 3. More TK needs to be documented and its use promoted 4. Harvest regulations should accommodate traditional practices 5. Good management needs to use both TK and SK; ENR and communities need to cooperate 6. Traditionally, people would let the leaders pass.
<i>B. Education</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educate children in respectful harvest practices and safety in school and by taking them out on the land

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Adults also need education about respectful harvesting practices (e.g., no waste, proper sighting, let leaders, pass, etc.) 3. Education should include traditional knowledge and harvesting practices for caribou 4. Use media (like radio) and road signs to remind people to respect caribou.
<i>C. Research Questions and Suggestions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need to document traditional knowledge about barren-ground caribou 2. Caribou population declines or cycles need to be better understood 3. Need research looking into habitat, insects and predators 4. Research needs to look at cumulative impacts, including climate change, competitors and human disturbance 5. The effects of development need to be better understood 6. Research needs to look into interactions between species 7. Research needs to look into herd 'mixing' or 'inter-herd' movements 8. Predation rates and impact on herds should be studied.
<i>D. Harvest Levels and Hunting Pressure</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accurate harvest reporting is needed for management planning 2. Harvest reporting should be mandatory 3. Harvest surveys need good promotion and education programs to be successful 4. Information needs to be shared between communities and regions 5. Need to find funding sources for harvest monitoring.
<i>E. Scientific Knowledge and Research Practices</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Surveys should be done during migrations 2. There were mixed feelings about how stressful scientific surveys were for caribou 3. Research methods should be adapted to minimize stress on caribou at sensitive times.

<i>F. Using Local People</i>	Three comments only – community members should assist with monitoring and be involved in the counts. Environmental monitors need to have proper training.
<i>Section 4: If management actions limit the harvest of caribou, how should the herd be shared?</i>	
<i>A. Making Tough Decisions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stricter harvesting regulations may be necessary 2. Management needs to be cooperative and restrictions need to be followed by each region.
<i>B. Communication and Cooperation among Regions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All users need to come together to talk about what to do 2. Good information (like harvest data) should be shared and plans negotiated among different regions 3. There was a need for better communication about regulations 4. There was a need to coordinate with neighbouring regions.
<i>C. Switching Foods and Sharing Harvests</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The management plan will need to consider how people will meet their needs to be effective 2. Forms of compensation, organized hunts or community meat purchases could help people meet their needs and take pressure off caribou 3. Need better distribution of meat from outfitters 4. Sharing is important in the community and should continue 5. Other foods could be other types of caribou, fish, moose and store-bought meat.
<i>D. Tags and Quota Systems</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tag/quota allocations in some areas impact other nearby areas and user groups differently; quotas need to be fair and consider regional impacts.

<p><i>E. Fairness</i></p>	<p>Two comments only – everybody needs to work together and the same rules need to be applied everywhere. Resident hunters only take 50 caribou a year and don't feel they should be penalized.</p>
<p><i>F. Development and Disturbance</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impacts of industrial activities and developments on caribou need to be considered and monitored 2. Habitat protection needs to be part of the management plan 3. Industry can negatively impact caribou habitat 4. Limiting industry needs to be part of the management plan.
<p><i>G. Non-Subsistence Hunting</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were some concerns about outfitter methods, harvest rates and impacts on herd structure (i.e., taking big bulls) 2. There was a need to address commercial sales/hunts that were taking place 3. Selling caribou was not considered a traditional activity.
<p><i>H. Enforcement</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were suggestions that there needs to be greater monitoring and/or regulation of commercial meat sales 2. There were concerns about harvesters coming in from other areas to harvest and how to regulate those activities 3. It could be difficult to enforce when regulations differ by herd.