



Tłch'ádıı hé Gots'edi (Living with Wildlife)

Predators and Competitors

Environment and Natural Resources - Public Listening
Information Requests – Round 3

January 14, 2022

Déłıne IR to NWT Environment and Natural Resources (ENR)

1. In Dehlá Got'ıne's ʔæde Plan they quote from the Recovery Strategy for Barren-Ground ʔæde in the Northwest Territories, NWT Species at Risk, 2020. In the quote, it says that additional information is needed on the impact of Industrial development on caribou. Please provide an update on the GNWT's work to gather that additional needed information.

The GNWT supports a number of research and monitoring projects to provide information that improve our understanding of impacts of industrial development on barren-ground caribou, both through work that it undertakes and by supporting efforts by other agencies. This work largely falls under the following program areas:

1. **The Northwest Territories Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (NWT CIMP)** is a source of environmental monitoring and research in the NWT. The goal of the program is to support resource management decision-making and sustainable development by improving our understanding of cumulative impacts. The program conducts, coordinates and funds the collection, analysis and reporting of information related to environmental conditions, including impacts associated with human activities.

NWT CIMP is focused on cumulative impacts related to three valued components of critical importance to the people of the NWT: caribou, water, and fish. NWT CIMP considers all sources of knowledge, including Indigenous and scientific knowledge.

Barren-ground caribou monitoring projects that NWT CIMP is currently funding:

- CIMP94: Tıchq Ekwo Nàowo: "Boots on the Ground" Bathurst caribou monitoring program
- CIMP207: Cumulative effects assessment of four barren-ground caribou herds in the NWT
- CIMP214: Bridging traditional and scientific knowledge through a novel predictive approach to understanding the role of pathogens in the decline of a key Arctic species
- CIMP219: Cumulative effects of fire, permafrost, and human development on caribou habitat and recovery

Barren-ground caribou monitoring projects previously supported by NWT CIMP:

- CIMP50: Spatial distribution of wolves on Bathurst caribou summer range
- CIMP67: Monitoring and Understanding Movement and Distribution of Bathurst Caribou
- CIMP79: Communities, Caribou and Climate Change: A Sahtu Region Traditional Knowledge Research and Monitoring Program

- CIMP80: Environmental Impact Assessment and Monitoring Guidelines for Differentiating Natural Variation from Development-related Impacts on Caribou
- CIMP85: Modeling cumulative impacts on summer range of the Bathurst caribou herd: a demonstration project
- CIMP96: Gwich'in harvest monitoring
- CIMP113: Moose and caribou health: Monitoring the emergence and impacts of winter tick (*Dermacentor albipictus*) in the Sahtú Settlement Area
- CIMP133: Snowpack accumulation: Influence on caribou distribution, surface water chemistry and lake productivity
- CIMP141: Data and knowledge integration for improved monitoring of cumulative impacts of mining development and climate change on the Bathurst caribou (DAICI)
- CIMP150: Tłı̨ch̓ community-based monitoring of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou
- CIMP153: CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment Network (CARMA) Knowledge to action: Developing and testing thresholds and monitoring for cumulative impacts on caribou
- CIMP158: Dene mapping project repatriation and analysis: Understanding valued places at the intersection of caribou ecology and harvesting
- CIMP160: Community-based monitoring of wildlife health phase 2: Stress and pathogens in a changing landscape
- CIMP 165: Evaluating diversity and spatial organization of caribou in the Sahtú region for management and environmental impact assessment
- CIMP170: Impacts of wildfire extent and severity on caribou habitat: from woodland to barren ground
- CIMP171: Barren-ground caribou Traditional Knowledge mapping and analysis
- CIMP172: Bathurst caribou resource selection function updates
- CIMP187: Changes in vegetation productivity and phenology across the Bathurst Caribou Range
- CIMP208: Assessing the disturbance responses of barren-ground caribou to industrial infrastructure

Project results can be found by searching for the NWT CIMP project number (e.g. CIMP197) on the NWT Discovery Portal (www.nwtdiscoveryportal.enr.gov.nt.ca).

2. **Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plans (WMMP)** are an important tool for the protection and conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat in the NWT. WMMP's help ensure sustainable development by allowing developers to demonstrate how they will mitigate the impacts of their project, test impact predictions and adapt management in response to their learnings.

ENR has required Minister-approved Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plans (WMMPs) for each of the Ekati, Diavik, Gahcho Kue and Snap Lake diamond mines under section 95(1) of the *Wildlife Act*. With respect to barren-ground caribou, each of the WMMPs for these developments include monitoring programs to evaluate the zone of influence of the mines on caribou movements, habitat selection and distribution. Past analyses using data collected by the mines to evaluate zone of influence were used to inform measures of habitat disturbance and habitat disturbance thresholds identified in the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan. The WMMPs for Diavik, Ekati and Gahcho Kue also include caribou behavior monitoring programs to evaluate how much time caribou spend engaged in different behaviours (feeding, resting, moving) at different distances from the mines, as well as their response to stressors such as passing vehicles. Each of these WMMPs are currently going through the review and approval process.

The mines have also made contributions to regional scale barren-ground caribou monitoring programs, through provision of funds to purchase of GPS collars that include a “geofencing” feature which allows for more frequent collection of collar locations when caribou are in closer proximity to the mines. Data from these collars has been used by organizations such as the Independent Environmental Monitoring Agency to evaluate the effect of the mines on movement behaviors and whether seasonal migration movements were delayed.

In addition, the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk highway WMMP requires research and monitoring related to assessing impacts of the road on barren-ground caribou. The highway, which was built from 2014-2017, bisects the southwestern extent of seasonal ranges of the Cape Bathurst and Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula caribou herds. Of interest is whether the presence of the highway has affected caribou habitat selection and distribution relative to the highway. Analysis of collar data from the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst herds during the fall, winter, and spring suggests the road has impacted caribou range use to the west of the road. Release of a final report is pending.

- 3. Implementation of the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan (BCRP).** The BCRP makes recommendations for the management of habitat on the range of the Bathurst caribou herd. It establishes a cumulative disturbance framework that identifies tiered management responses based on the amount of total disturbance within five different areas of the range. Recommendations in the BCRP also include community guardianship, habitat conservation, use of mobile caribou conservation measures, road planning and management, offsetting/compensatory mechanisms, wildlife and fuels management, and online map staking to reduce impacts of industrial development on Bathurst caribou. Implementation of the Plan is being done collaboratively, and provides opportunities for shared learning with Industry partners toward meeting objectives of the Plan. As an example, the development of a Framework document, Operational Guidance document and a Pilot Project on mobile caribou conservation measures has advanced our

understanding of the detection of caribou presence, seasonal sensitivity, and appropriate management responses for small to medium scale mineral exploration projects.

2. In your response to IR Q2.1.1.4, you said that ENR supports CCPs as they are a valuable part of overall wildlife and harvest management. Please elaborate on how you plan to formally incorporate CCPs into the overall wildlife and harvest management system, particularly into GNWT law, regulation and policy.

Community conservation plans and community-based self-regulation can make important contributions at a local or regional scale as part of a coordinated approach to overall caribou management and harvest management.

There may be some aspects of a community conservation plan that are not appropriate for inclusion in regulations under the *Wildlife Act*. This would include items which are not enforceable under the *Wildlife Act*, are inconsistent with court decisions or the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, and any matter for which a consistent approach across the Northwest Territories has been taken under the *Wildlife Act*.

Community conservation plans will be implemented and enforced to the extent possible through regulations under the *Wildlife Act*. Once a community conservation plan has been approved by both the SRRB and the Minister, the GNWT can include those aspects of the plan that are appropriate for inclusion in regulations under the *Wildlife Act*.

3. In our *Belare Wíle Gots'é ?ekwé – Caribou for All Time – A Délıne Got'ıne Plan of Action* for 2021-2023 and in our answer to Q2.1.1.13, we provided updates on our work with ENR to implement our Plan. We would like some further information from ENR related to that work. Specifically, in May 29, 2021, we sent a letter to Minister Shane Thompson with our comments on changes needed to improve the CHAP program. Please provide a response to that letter or explain how the GNWT is responding to our points set out in that letter.

ENR would be happy to meet with the Délıne Renewable Resource Council (DRRC) as outlined in their answer to Q2.1.1.13. To set up a meeting please contact Regional Biologist Kevin Chan by email at Kevin.Chan@gov.nt.ca or by phone at (867)587-3519.

ENR would like to thank the DRRC for their thoughtful and thorough comments on the Community Harvesters Assistance Program (CHAP) evaluation provided in their letter dated May 29, 2021. ENR received and reviewed the letter, along with input from many sources including a meeting with the Sahtu Nę K'ə Dene Ts'ıli Forum in June 2021. All feedback ENR received has been documented in a "What we Heard Report" that also lists eight key actions ENR will take over the next six months to update CHAP. The "What we Heard Report" will be released in mid-January 2022 to seek comments by Indigenous governments, Indigenous

organizations, renewable resource boards, renewable resource councils and the public. A final report will be released in summer 2022.

Some of the proposed actions going forward include:

- Reviewing and refining criteria for how funds can be spent and who is eligible to receive them, which may help broaden the scope of the program;
- Exploring potential development of complementary mentorship and training programs that would support skill development so people can meaningfully participate in CHAP;
- Refining and revising the program's goals and objectives to reflect the main reasons the program exists, and how the program achieves outcomes that support food security, knowledge transfer and skill development, culture and well-being; and
- Updating the current funding formula and looking for opportunities to access new resources to expand the program.

In terms of lump sum payments for activities, ENR will consider ways to minimize administrative burdens on recipients. This is also identified as an action in the ENR Sustainable Livelihoods Action Plan.

With respect to *Belare Wíle Gots'é ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time – A Délıne Got'ıne Plan of Action*, ENR is happy to work with Délıne to consider support for harvesting programs, including those with an emphasis on alternative harvest, as well as mentorship of youth and beginner harvesters of all ages. Support could include funding for capacity, depending on needs and priorities, and would align with the direction set out in *Belare Wíle Gots'é ʔekwé – Caribou for All Time – A Délıne Got'ıne Plan of Action*.

For example, in March 2020, ENR worked with the DRCC and met with community Elders to plan a country food gathering in Délıne, which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. We would be happy to revisit this collaboration once it is safe to do so or explore collaborating on alternative activities Délıne would like to explore.

ENR continues to support ongoing country food research in the Sahtu, including as a partner on SRRB-led projects, such as the Dene Béré proposal for women and youth harvesting program. Support for country food initiatives was identified in ENR's 2020 IR responses.

4. In order to rebuild good relationships between local communities and ENR and foster mentoring and support, will ENR make it mandatory that, when invited, ENR officers and local ENR employees must attend RRC meetings, Working Group meetings, community events, and be involved with the RRC?

ENR collaborates with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, communities and the public across the NWT to protect the environment and make sure resources are used sustainably and wisely. This collaborative approach is an important part of building and enhancing good working relationships and supporting wildlife co-management. ENR is committed to discuss opportunities for ongoing and new collaborations with the RRC and community.

While ENR cannot make it mandatory for ENR officers and local ENR employees to attend all RRC meetings, working groups, meetings and community events, ENR recognizes the importance of attending these events with the RRCs. Staff will strive to attend as many events as possible to which they are invited. To support participation of ENR employees, it would be appreciated if RRCs provide as much prior notice as possible to enable ENR staff to build attendance into their schedules.