



March 16, 2021

Ms. Rhea McDonald, President
Norman Wells ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ (Renewable Resources Council)
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Mr. Daniel Jackson, President
Fort Good Hope ʔehdzo Got'ineᑦ (Renewable Resources Council)
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Dear Ms. McDonald and Mr. Jackson:

Support for Dehlá Got'ineᑦ Community Conservation Plan

I am writing today to follow-up on letters submitted by each of the Norman Wells and Fort Good Hope Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs) to the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) dated March 1, 2021 that were broadly circulated by the SRRB on March 3, 2021 (attached).

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) welcomes every opportunity to hear from Indigenous governments and organizations, renewable resource boards and other co-management partners on the wise management and conservation of wildlife.

We recognize the importance of your input to the SRRB's public listening process, and would like to provide additional information and clarification on several points raised in your letters.

The Minister of ENR submitted his response to the SRRB's "*Sahtú Ragóza (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting: Report on the Colville 2020 Public Listening (Hearing) Session Report and Reasons for Decision*" on January 29, 2021. In the Minister's submission (attached), detailed responses were provided to each of the 26 decisions and recommendations from the SRRB following the public listening process held in 2020.

ENR recognizes the important contribution of community-based initiatives as a part of overall caribou management efforts. Throughout the public listening process and in our final submission, ENR has clearly stated its support for community conservation planning, and has committed to working with communities in the Sahtu as they advance their plans, including Délı̨neᑦ's community conservation plan.

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ENR has been supportive of Colville Lake's efforts to develop a community conservation plan for barren-ground caribou, and signed an Interim Management Agreement with the community on December 20, 2019 that guides how we work together to support caribou conservation and management. In the Minister's response to the SRRB's final report, ENR committed to work with Colville Lake to implement the Interim Management Agreement until an approved final plan is in effect. While there are certain elements of the draft plan that remain challenging, ENR has supported the majority of what Colville Lake has put forward.

In its final report, the SRRB indicated it would approve Colville's Plan after several outstanding components are addressed including: caribou monitoring, harvest monitoring and reporting, a plan for caribou conservation and food security, and an evaluation framework. Similarly, the Minister's response identified several areas that require further discussion to ensure consistency with the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA) and the *Wildlife Act*, and make sure the plan is consistent with the rights of other Indigenous governments and organizations on the range of shared caribou herds.

In Recommendation 4.1, the SRRB recommended that the Colville Lake RRC be granted the power to issue authorizations to all types of harvesters in the entire Wildlife Management Barren-ground Caribou Area S/BC/01, which raises some potential cause for concern. This would delegate a key part of the decision-making process to the Colville Lake RRC in terms of the extent to which the rights of participants in Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells are restricted.

This has implications for Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells, where the RRCs have received an allocation of Bluenose-West caribou. To be able to harvest a Bluenose-West caribou in S/BC/01, Sahtu participants would be required to obtain an authorization issued by the Colville Lake RRC, which the Colville Lake RRC would have full discretion to refuse to issue or limit the quantity of caribou harvested by a Sahtu beneficiary from Fort Good Hope or Norman Wells. For the Minister to potentially agree to the substance of this recommendation, the fully informed consent of the RRCs in both Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells is required.

ENR is prepared to make funding of up to \$5,000 available for your RRC to retain legal counsel of your choice to advise you of the implications that would result from, and ensure a full understanding of the SRRB's Recommendation 4.1. Please advise by March 19, 2021 if you would like to accept this offer. **If so, ENR asks that you obtain the legal advice and respond to ENR by April 9, 2021 to indicate whether you remain supportive of this aspect of Colville's draft Plan.**

ENR is willing to consider additional approaches to harvest management that are locally supported, effectively manage harvest, meet the needs of all harvesters that harvest from a shared herd, and are consistent with land claim agreements and the direction and guidance set out and agreed to in the broader management plans for specific caribou herds.

The overarching wildlife co-management approach in the Northwest Territories (NWT) provides for the direct involvement of Indigenous governments and organizations and renewable resources boards established under land claims in wildlife management. The evolution of the co-management process in the NWT has played an important role in including communities in wildlife management and fostering a collaborative approach to the conservation of caribou.

The SRRB is the main instrument of wildlife management in the Sahtu Settlement Area, and the RRCs play an important role under the SDMCLCA. For the Bluenose-West caribou herd, responsibility for the herd is also shared with the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT) and many local communities. ENR needs to work with all Indigenous governments and organizations, renewable resource boards and other co-management partners across the herd's range, and ensure local, regional and herd-wide conservation efforts support the interests and rights of all groups.

ENR looks forward to continuing to work with the SRRB and RRCs to implement caribou conservation measures in the Sahtu, including, upon approval, the Colville Lake Caribou Conservation Plan. We are also looking forward to working together with all co-management partners across the Bluenose-West herd range to continue the good work done under the collaboratively developed *Taking Care of Caribou Plan*, in addition to community-based initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shane Thompson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shane Thompson
Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Attachments

c. Distribution list.

Distribution list

Chairperson Charles McNeely
Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated

President Edwin Erutse
Yamoga Land Corporation

President Aurora McNeely
Fort Good Hope Métis Nation Local #54

President Sherry Hodgson
Norman Wells Land Corporation

Grand Chief Wilbert Kochon
Sahtu Dene Council

Chief Daniel Masuzumi
Fort Good Hope Dene Band

Honourable Caroline Cochrane
Premier

Ms. Shaleen Woodward
Principal Secretary
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Mr. Martin Goldney
Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Dr. Erin Kelly
Deputy Minister
Environment & Natural Resources

Ms. Shawn McCann
Acting Deputy Secretary
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Dr. Brett Elkin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations
Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford, A/Director, Wildlife and Fish Division
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Dr. Deborah Simmons, Executive Director
Sahtú Renewable Resources Board

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