



## Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 27 May 2025

**Location:** Wekweètì Culture Camp, Wekweètì, NT

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Board Members:

Travis Washie (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Isabelle Duclos (Federal Appointee)  
Suzanne Carrière (GNWT Appointee)  
Eddie Chocolate (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Tom Lafferty (Tłıchq Appointee)  
Stu Niven (Federal Appointee)

Staff:

Laura Meinert  
Amanda Weltman  
Jody Pellissey

Interpreters:

James Rabesca  
Peter Huskey

Guests:

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, TG

Regrets:

Joseph Judas (Chair)  
Steve Matthews (GNWT Appointee)  
Janelle Nitsiza (Tłıchq Appointee)

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## Appoint Chairperson

**Motion #977-27-05-2025**

*To appoint Tom Lafferty as chair for the May 27, 2025 meeting*

**Moved:**

Stu Niven

**Second:**

Travis Washie

**Motion Approved**

**Call to Order:** 10:30 a.m.

**Opening Prayer:** Eddie Chocolate

## 1.0 Agenda and Previous Minutes

### 1.1 Approval of Agenda

**Motion #978-27-05-2025**

*To approve the 27 May 2025 agenda as presented*

**Moved:**

Suzanne Carrière

**Second:**

Isabelle Duclos

**Motion Approved**

## 1.2 Approval of Minutes

11-12 February 2025

***Motion #979-27-05-2025***

*To approve the 11-12 February 2025 minutes as presented*

**Moved:  
Second:**

Suzanne Carrière  
Isabelle Duclos

**Motion Approved**

### 1.3 Review of Action Items

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

## 2.0 Business

## 2.1 Review & Approval of COSEWIC Species Designation for Snowy Owl

The Snowy Owl was previously assessed by COSEWIC in 1995 as *Not at Risk* because it was widespread with no evidence of decline. In 2004, worldwide population estimates for Snowy Owl were 290,000 individuals. Since then, advances in population modelling and genetics have given more accurate population estimates, and currently the population in Canada is estimated at 14,200-15,000 mature individuals, which is estimated to be 90-95% of the North American population. Additional population monitoring through the annual Christmas Bird Count shows a decline of 42.6% over the last 24 years (3 generations).

The biggest threat to Snowy Owl is climate change, which influences prey population dynamics, the availability of suitable breeding habitat, and increased storms. Sources of mortality include vehicle strikes, airplane collisions, and electrocution. Pesticides (e.g. anti-coagulant rodenticides) and diseases (e.g. Avian Influenza) also pose threats to Snowy Owl. Population declines are expected to continue because of these ongoing threats.

On March 25, 2025, the WRRB provided an in-principal support of the Threatened designation. If listed as *Threatened* under SARA, a recovery strategy will be required.

***Motion #984-27-05-2025***

*To approve the designation of threatened  
for Snowy Owl as presented*

**Moved:  
Second:**

Stu Niven  
Suzanne Carrière

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #698-27-05-2025 (ED):** To write letter to Birds Species Specialist Committee to approve the species designation of threatened for Snowy Owl.

## 2.2 Review & Approval of Commercial Timber Cutting Permit Application – John Rocher

Timber Cutting Permits (TCPs) are valid for up to one year but are used to facilitate the commercial sale of up to 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> of timber products. In addition to the \$20 application fee, harvesters pay additional stumpage dues, based on targeted species, timber condition, end products, and where in the NWT the harvesting is occurring.

John Rocher applied for a TCP, which would be valid from May 2025 to May 2026. He applied for 1100 m<sup>3</sup> of dead/green spruce/pine. The license is for 19cm or greater stump diameter outside bark, and 15 cm top diameter inside bark. The work will take place on Highway #3 between KM185 and KM186.

**Motion #980-27-05-2025**      *To approve John Rocher's Timber Cutting Permit Application as presented*

**Moved:** Suzanne Carrière  
**Second:** Travis Washie

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #694-27-05-2025 (ED):** To write letter to GNWT to approve John Rocher's Timber Cutting Permit Application.

### 2.3 Review & Approval of Wildlife Research Permit Application – Migratory Connectivity and Contaminants in Grebes

Horned Grebe and Red-Necked Grebe are not well-studied or monitored because they are generally not harvested species and are not usually included during regular waterfowl surveys. Horned Grebe was listed as Special Concern on the Federal Species at Risk Act in 2017, due to population declines. Red-necked Grebe populations have remained stable but have among the highest contaminant loads in Grebe species according to a 1980's study. Data from the NWT will be used to help understand contaminant exposure overall.

The WRP application, submitted by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Canadian Wildlife Service, requested support to conduct the following work at samplings sites between 5 and 50km on Highway 3 outside of Yellowknife: 1) Collect up to 10 eggs each from Horned Grebe and Red-necked Grebe nests for contaminant analysis; and 2) Only one egg from any nest will be collected, and only from nests with more than one egg. The application is for work occurring between June 1 to July 31, 2025.

In addition to this WRP Application, ECCC is required to also hold the following permits: CWS Scientific Permit, NWT Animal Care Permit, ECCC AUP Exemption Certificate.

**Motion #981-27-05-2025** To approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled "Migratory Connectivity

*and Contaminants in Grebes”, as presented pending receipt of required permitting*

**Moved:**  
**Second:**

Suzanne Carrière  
Travis Washie

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #695-27-05-2025 (ED):** To write letter to ECCC to approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled “*Migratory Connectivity and Contaminants in Grebes*”.

**2.4 Review & Approval of Wildlife Research Permit Application – NWT Biodiversity Monitoring Program and Threats to Boreal Treeline Birds**

This research would provide valuable information on several species that have undergone steep declines over the last 50 years and are expected to be impacted further by climate change. Harris’s Sparrow is a species of Special Concern under SARA, COSEWIC has scheduled Grey-cheeked Thrush for a status report preparation for November 2023, and Blackpoll Warbler and American Tree Sparrow are on the candidate assessment lists as mid-priority and low-priority, respectively. This work would also occur on the theoretical all-season road to Nunavut, making it potentially beneficial as baseline information for that project.

The WRP application, submitted by ECCC, Canadian Wildlife Service and Environment & Climate Change – GNWT, requested support to: 1) Deploy bird Acoustic Recording Units (ARUs) at approximately 60 sites around Lockhart camp, as well as 15 Bat ARUs and temperature loggers; 2) Set up a motus tower (bird tracking tower) by the Lockhart Camp; 3) Capture a maximum of 300 breeding birds from 11 focal species and fit metal and colour bands on their legs; 4) Birds will be captured in a grid of approximately 20 mist nets; 5) Take physical measurements of the birds, collect fecal and blood samples from 20 individuals from 4 species; and, 6) Fit radio transmitters to this subset of 20 individuals from 4 species. The application is for work occurring over a year and a half between June 22, 2025 to October 15, 2026.

In addition to this WRP Application, ECCC is required to also hold licenses from the Animal Use Protocol – WLS & CWS Animal Care Committee, Animal Use Protocol – Government of the Northwest Territories, Scientific Permit to Capture and Band Migratory Birds – CWS, Saskatchewan Wildlife Research Permit – Government of Saskatchewan.

**Motion #982-27-05-2025**

*To approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled “NWT Biodiversity Monitoring Program and Threats to Boreal Treeline Birds”, as presented pending receipt of required permitting*

**Moved:**  
**Second:**

Stu Niven  
Eddie Chocolate  
**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #696-27-05-2025 (ED):** To write letter to ECCC and GNWT to approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled “*NWT Biodiversity Monitoring Program and Threats to Boreal Treeline Birds*”.

2.5 Review & Approval of Funding Proposal – Causes and Consequences of Bathurst Caribou Calving Ground Switching and Shifts Relative to the Neighbouring Bluenose-East and Beverly Herds

A collaborative group of researchers, including TG, GNWT, and the WRRG, led by Eliezer Gurarie, Professor at the Department of Environmental Biology, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, submitted this funding proposal. This research builds on previous work conducted with GNWT collaring data and WRRB support, and addresses key concerns previously identified by the Board, including uncertainty around ewe winter distribution and the complexity of managing overlapping herds.

The proposed work includes updating existing analyses with GNWT collar data through to June 2025, mapping winter and pre-calving overlap among the Kqk’èetì, Sahtì, and Beverly herds, and investigating the influence of social behavior and memory on calving site selection.

The work directly aligns with WRRB priorities and would provide critical insights into the social and ecological drivers of calving ground shifts and herd mixing. This knowledge is vital for better understanding Kqk’èetì caribou recovery and future and will be a valuable resource in future environmental assessments, especially those related to winter road and development projects in and near Wek’èezhì.

The project was originally slated to be supported in part through GNWT’s Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program. However, due to recent restrictions preventing GNWT from funding American researchers or institutions, this funding was withdrawn. As a result, the proponents requested WRRB support to cover costs. The total requested amount is **\$20,600**.

**Motion #983-27-05-2025**      *To approve funding proposal, entitled “Causes and Consequences of Bathurst Caribou Calving Ground Switching and Shifts Relative to the Neighbouring Bluenose-East and Beverly Herds”, for \$20,600 as presented*

**Moved:**  
**Second:**

Stu Niven  
Isabelle Duclos

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #697-27-05-2025 (ED):** To write letter to SUNY-ESF to approve the funding proposal, entitled “Causes and Consequences of Bathurst Caribou Calving Ground Switching and Shifts Relative to the Neighbouring Bluenose-East and Beverly Herds”.

## 2.6 Update on Winter Road Harvest & Wastage

In December 2021, the Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC) hosted a meeting of respected harvesters from seven Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to discuss ways to work together to encourage legal and respectful harvesting of the Kq̓k'èti Ekwò herd. This meeting led to eight joint recommendations. There were some positive results from that meeting; in 2024, there were no cases of illegal harvest in the Mobile Core Bathurst Caribou Management Zone (or Mobile Zone) and a small number of wastage cases.

However, the 2025 winter road harvest season saw a significant increase in the number of illegal harvest cases along the winter road, including wastage of full carcasses and one case of wastage involving 22 pregnant cows, where most only had the backstraps taken. As of March 5, 2025, there were 9 cases of wastage (total of 48 caribou). These cases are all still under investigation.

Community monitors and guardian programs from North Slave Métis Alliance, Tłı̨chq̓ Government, and Yellowknives Dene First Nation assisted Renewable Resource Officers along the Tibbitt to Contwoyto Winter Road and were extremely helpful in supporting the Officers in responding to illegal and disrespectful harvesting. In a March 7, 2025 letter, the ECC Minister requested that Grand Chiefs, Chiefs, and Presidents continue support to actively promote messaging related to caribou conservation and the importance of safe, respectful, and legal harvesting practices.

Discussions included: harvesting of caribou/wolves during the day and night, stories of people doing multiple hunts of 20-30 caribou, shooting into herds, harvesting cows, younger harvesters, consider 24-hour monitoring as currently monitors work only 9am to 6pm, better training of the monitors and how to interact with the public; security on the road at check stations, more honest reporting, mandating number of caribou per household, disrespectful harvesting practices, lots of garbage; harvesters breaking the law are reported to RROs, but it doesn't seem like anything ever happens, RROs note frustration with charges/investigations not making it into the courts and charges actual sticking; what can we do as a Board to help? Educate/communicate, ensure clear wording in regulations for clearer interpretation, share videos/pictures of garbage, wastage, gut piles? Shine the light on the offenders and maybe will step back.

## 2.7 Update on Nàìl̨ Strategic Plan

On March 3, 2025, Board Staff were presented with a draft version of the Nàìl̨ Strategic Plan, as well as a draft management proposal template. Board Staff reviewed the draft plan and management proposal and took into consideration the level of detail in the draft Plan and the stages in which the Board should be involved. Board Staff discussed amongst themselves that the Draft Strategic Plan was not itself a plan to manage Nàìl̨, but a preliminary Plan so that in the future, the area can become a park through separate documents and plans.

On March 14, WRRB staff had a meeting with Tłı̨chq̓ Government, Department of Culture and Lands Protection Staff to discuss Board staff concerns and future

steps. WRRB staff provided comments on the draft Strategic Plan to TG Staff. TG staff agreed that a future management proposal to the WRRB would focus on a pilot day use area at Nàlìl over one or two years. Board Staff suggested that if a Nàlìl Advisory Board were to be established, the WRRB should have a formal observer role in that process, so that the Board's authority is kept separate, while enabling the observer to refer necessary matters to the WRRB when required.

TG staff committed to developing a more detailed management plan for a future pilot opening of the park, and to update the WRRB on the project's progress by the end of the season. Board staff made general comments on wildlife and wildlife habitat protection in the park, as well as monitoring. As the draft plan had minimal details, comments were restricted to what was available as well as general guidance on the potential impacts of increased tourism to the area.

## 2.8 Update on Mackenzie Bison Working Group (MBWG)

On April 8 and 9, 2025, WRRB Staff attended a meeting of the MBWG in Fort Providence. Discussions included an update on monitoring activities, updates from communities and government partners, harvest updates, and a presentation from the Bison Integrated Genomics project. MBWG members were asked to review the updates to the Mackenzie Bison Management Plan and seek comments or approvals before the next MBWG meeting, so that the Plan can be finalized, before it undergoes public review and submission to the WRRB for final approval.

The MBWG also agreed to recommend that ejie tags be increased from 40 to 60 per year, and to be for either sex. This recommendation is based on the increasing population of the herd and the corresponding sustainable harvest level, outlined in the Management Plan. A regulation will be drafted and shown to the MBWG for confirmation before it begins the process, including submission to the WRRB as a Management Proposal.

The next MBWG meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 19 in Behchokò.

## 2.9 Update on Species at Risk Committee (SARC)

The SARC met April 29-30, 2025, to re-assess the status of Western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) and Northern leopard frog (*Lithobates pipiens*) and assess the status of Canadian toad (*Anaxyrus hemiophrys*) in the NWT. The assessments were based on the approved status reports, which contain the best available information from both Indigenous and Community Knowledge (ICK) and Scientific Knowledge (SK) sources. There was not enough ICK information to assess any of the species with the ICK criteria; all were assessed using only SK assessment criteria.

SARC determined that Western toad is a *Threatened* species in the NWT. Western toad was first assessed as *Threatened* in 2014. This reassessment reflects the species' limited distribution (3 locations in the NWT) and vulnerability to random and unpredictable events such as disease outbreaks.

Chytridiomycosis has been found in western toads, and there is evidence of ranavirus within the range. An outbreak could decimate the population.

SARC determined that Northern leopard frog is an *Endangered* species in the NWT. Northern leopard frog was first assessed as *Threatened* in 2013. This assessment reflects the relatively small area of the NWT where the species occurs, a continued decline in habitat, locations and individuals, and the increasing threat of disease. Northern leopard frogs in the NWT were found to be genetically distinct from other populations in western Canada; they also have low genetic diversity and a high incidence of inbreeding.

SARC determined that the Canadian toad could not be assessed and sought guidance from the Conference of Management Authorities. The Canadian toad has no verified occurrences outside of the Wood Buffalo National Park Reserve and therefore the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* is not applicable for a species where federal laws prevail, including National Parks.

The CMA will engage with NWT communities and decide if Western toad should be re-listed as a *Threatened* species in the NWT, and if Northern leopard frog should be listed as *Endangered*.

## 2.10 Update on Conference of Management Authorities (CMA)

The CMA most recently met on May 20-21, 2025 in Inuvik. During the meeting, the NWT Species at Risk Committee (SARC) presented on their reassessments of western toad (threatened) and northern leopard frog (endangered). The engagement period to seek input on the listing decisions for western toad and northern leopard frog is from August 15 to November 1.

SARC also sought guidance from the CMA on whether an assessment should be completed on Canadian toad. The CMA made the decision to not assess Canadian toad as all known occurrence records of the species occur within Wood Buffalo National Park. As National Park lands are under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada based on the *Canada National Parks Act*, the responsibility of the Canadian toad does not fall to the CMA. The CMA noted that the assessment of Canadian toad should be revisited if observations are made outside of Wood Buffalo National Park in the future.

SARC also presented a proposed 2026-2030 assessment schedule. The CMA revised and approved the following schedule:

- **2026:** Wood bison (reassessment) and common muskrat
- **2027:** Northern myotis (reassessment), little brown myotis (reassessment), and barren-ground caribou, including Porcupine caribou (reassessment)
- **2028:** Muskoxen and rock cranberry (lingonberry)
- **2029:** Dall's sheep, Gypsy cuckoo bumble bee (reassessment), McKay's western bumble bee (reassessment), and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee
- **2030:** Northern mountain caribou (reassessment)

*The CMA released the Progress Report for Wood Bison in the NWT* at the end of April 2025. The CMA is currently preparing the *Progress Report for Barren-ground Caribou in the NWT* and the *Progress Report for Bats in the NWT*. The progress report will highlight actions taken by management partners to implement the recovery strategy for barren-ground caribou and management plan for bats



from 2021 to 2025 and progress made towards meeting its objectives. The progress reports will be made available to the public on April 9, 2026.

## 2.11 Party Updates

### a) Tłıchǵ Government, Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault

PowerPoint Presentation entitled, *"Preserving our Land: Preparing for the Future, Tłıchǵ Government Reforestation"*, tabled

Discussions included: white and black spruce burn hot and take up so much moisture from the surrounding ground, fires burning deeper into the ground, takes years for lichen to grow, TG wants to plant spruce so the area is natural; will TG be planting in blocks, i.e., leaving any blocks unplanted? Less planted? More planted? TG is considering how planting will be done, plan to do regular monitoring; important to realize that may not have results quickly, spent 10 years measuring tree growth before able to tell if planting was successful, no trees in first three years, then pine, then spruce (already there but not growing, very small, some grew and some died); beware for snowshoe hare as they will chew on new trees as candy, elders will know what is browsing by the teeth marks; will there be a management proposal for the 11 million trees? Important to include the Board, report at end of 2025, proposal in 2026, suggestion to include WRRB as observers in the planning; tree planting may be considered as caribou offsetting for Tłıchǵ Highway? Obligations/commitments for boreal caribou, possible funding available (GNWT); share draft Tłıchǵ Wildfire Study publication and presentation by Sandeep Agrawal commissioned by TG with Board.

### b) Environment & Climate Change – GNWT

Headquarters Update tabled

## 3.0 Financial

### 3.1 Review & Approval of Eddie (Edııwa) Erasmus Memorial Scholarship Recipients

**Motion #985-27-05-2025**      *To approve the \$1000 scholarship each for Antonia Dryneck, Claudia Haas, Jonathan Gillingham, and Ty Lafferty*

**Moved:**                                      Suzanne Carrière  
**Second:**                                     Eddie Chocolate

**Motion Approved**

**ACTION #699-27-05-2025 (ED):** To write letters to Eddie (Edııwa) Erasmus Memorial Scholarship award winners.

### 3.2 Review & Approval of Financial Statements as of 31 March 2025

**Motion #986-27-05-2025** *To approve the financial statement as of 31 March 2025 as presented*

**Moved:** Travis Washie  
**Second:** Isabelle Duclos

**Motion Approved**

### 3.3 Update on Future Funding Agreements with CIRNAC

The Modern Treaty, Consultation, and Intergovernmental Relations Sector (“the Sector”) started reducing the length of contribution agreements two to three years ago as funding approaches and standardized wording in the national model would change slightly every year, making it difficult to keep the wording up to date in the funding agreements. As such, it is easier to keep streamlined by reducing the length of the Agreements to five years, with flexibility to extend the length of the agreement if needed. Notwithstanding any future changes that may be made to the funding approach between now and 2027/28, the Sector would be proposing a five-year funding agreement at the conclusion of the current one that would allow for carrying forward of unexpended funds.

Around 2019, the funding approach was updated to FIXED funding for all of contribution agreements, including WRRB, because it was the approach that best fit the type of funding CIRNAC provides (on-going) that allows the recipient to carry forward unexpended funding into the next year, and also provides an additional year after the conclusion of the agreement to spend carry-over funds.

In 2023, the Sector removed the requirement for interim reporting to remove some of the recipient reporting burden and simplify the process.

### 3.4 Review of 2024/2025 Activity Report

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

## 4.0 Operations

#### 4.1 Review & Approval of Response to ERM Report

ERM completed the final third-party process review report as of January 2025. The report was shared with WRRB technical advisors, TG and GNWT. The report was added to the WRRB's website. Staff developed a qualitative assessment response to the final report. Board will defer decision until August 2025 meeting to allow more time for review.

## 5.0 Information Items

### 5.1 Working Group Table

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

5.2 Permit Tracking Table

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

5.3 Communications Update

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

**6.0 Other Items**

6.1 Round Table

Board Members thanked one another, interpreters, and staff for a good, efficient meeting. Members very happy to be in Wekweeti and staying at the Culture Camp, great food, very comfortable. Members happy to have visited with Joseph Judas and seen a caribou, hoping to tour the community and visit the old prophet's grave before leaving back to Yellowknife. Everyone wished one another a good summer.

6.2 Next Meeting

The next meeting dates are:

- August 26-27, 2025, Behchokò
- December 16-17, 2025, Yellowknife

**Closing Prayer: Eddie Chocolate**

**Adjournment: 4:21 p.m. (Motion #987-27-05-2025)**

Minutes Approved:

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**ORIGINALS SIGNED**

Chairperson

**August 26, 2025**

Date