



MAR 07 2019

Mr. Joseph Judas, Chair
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
4504 49TH AVENUE
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 1A7

Dear Mr. Judas:

Re: Section 12.5.6 of the Tłıchǫ Agreement – WRRB Predator Management Recommendations

Thank you for your letter dated February 6, 2019 providing the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board's (WRRB) recommendations to the Tłıchǫ Government (TG) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), Government of the Northwest Territories.

TG and ENR are providing the attached joint response to the WRRB's recommendations.

Sincerely,

Grand Chief George Mackenzie
Tłıchǫ Government
Behchokò, NT

Robert C. McLeod, Minister
Environment and Natural Resources
Yellowknife, NT

Attachment

- c. Dr. Joe Dragon, Deputy Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Rita Mueller, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations
Environment and Natural Resources

Dr. Brett Elkin, Director, Wildlife
Environment and Natural Resources

Mr. Bruno Croft, Superintendent, North Slave Region
Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Laura Duncan, Tłıchǵ Executive Officer
Tłıchǵ Government

Ms. Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Director, Culture and Lands Protection
Tłıchǵ Government

Mr. Michael Birlea, Manager, Culture and Lands Protection
Tłıchǵ Government

Ms. Jody Pellissey, Executive Director
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

WRRB Predator Management Recommendations

Recommendation #1-2019 (Predator): The WRRB supports continuing the ENR's dīga harvest incentive program and the TG's Community Based Dīga Harvesting Project as an education tool.

Response:

ENR and TG accept this recommendation.

ENR thanks the WRRB for their support of the Enhanced North Slave Wolf Harvest Incentive Program and notes that the program will continue until the prime fur season for wolves ends on May 31.

TG acknowledges and thanks the WRRB for its support of the Tłıchq Community-Based Dīga Harvesting Project, which is still under development. Tłıchq elders have been key proponents for developing and implementing a training program for Tłıchq hunters to become knowledgeable and effective harvesters of dīga. The training program engages Tłıchq elders directly so that Tłıchq knowledge and practices for hunting dīga are maintained and transmitted to the next generation of hunters. TG staff are working with selected Tłıchq hunters to provide them with additional training on harvesting and skinning methods through workshops that will be held in collaboration with ENR.

Recommendation #2-2019 (Predator): The WRRB recommends that dīga monitoring be undertaken so that population estimates, or indexes are generated. In addition, as much information as possible, including condition, diet, and reproductive status, should be collected from each harvested dīga.

Response:

ENR and TG accept this recommendation. ENR and TG agree that important aspects for assessing wolf management actions will be to a) monitor the relative abundance of dīga based on indices as removal actions are undertaken and b) evaluate health and condition of dīga including age, sex, diet, and reproductive status.

ENR and TG will develop and pilot a protocol for monitoring relative abundance of dīga in an adaptive manner to evaluate feasibility of sampling and robustness of results.

For each wolf carcass ENR receives, basic data on age, sex, diet, and reproductive status will be collected.

Recommendation #3-2019 (Predator): The WRRB recommends that dīga management be undertaken in Wek'èezhìi. TG and ENR should review the “*Wolf Technical Feasibility Assessment: Options for Managing Wolves on the Range of the Bathurst Barren-ground Caribou Herd*” submitted in November 2017 to determine the most effective, humane and cost-efficient methods that would have the least impact and disturbance on the ekwò herds themselves.

Response:

ENR and TG accept this recommendation, and will use the feasibility assessment to develop the program.

ENR's Enhanced North Slave Wolf Incentive Program encourages harvesters to undertake ground-based shooting and/or snaring on the winter range of the Bluenose-East and Bathurst barren-ground caribou herds. The program is an extension of the previous program and was implemented to address requests from Indigenous hunters for further incentives to harvest wolves. This pilot project includes monitoring; ENR will track the number of dīga harvested and the observations of dīga reported by hunters as well as hunters' feedback on the logistics of harvesting dīga on the winter range. ENR will adaptively manage this program; if it is clear that this program is not resulting in a significant number of harvested dīga, enhancements will be made to the program and/or other options outlined in the feasibility assessment will be considered.

Recommendation #4-2019 (Predator): The WRRB recommends that dīga management should be closely monitored for effectiveness of halting or slowing the decline of the sahtì ekwò and kokètì ekwò herds in order to provide future harvesting opportunities.

Response:

ENR and TG accept this recommendation. ENR and TG are working together to develop management actions to help recover caribou and developing a joint proposal on dīga management. Monitoring will be included as part of the implementation of any wolf management program. At the same time, ENR and TG have proposed to increase the monitoring of both the sahtì ekwò and kokètì ekwò herds as outlined in the *Joint Proposal on Management Actions for the Bluenose-East ?ekwò (Barren-ground caribou) Herd: 2019-2021* and the *Joint Proposal on Management Actions for the Bathurst ?ekwò (Barren-ground caribou) Herd: 2019-2021*.

Recommendation #5-2019 (Predator): The WRRB recommends that the GNWT and TG work with the Government of Nunavut to enact predator management actions on the calving grounds of sahtì ekwò and kokètì ekwò in Nunavut.

Response:

As neither ENR nor TG have law-making jurisdiction in Nunavut we are unable to accept the recommendation as worded. ENR and TG would like to vary this recommendation, as the GNWT and TG can discuss potential predator management actions on the calving grounds of sahtì ekwò and kokètì ekwò with the Government of Nunavut.

Recommendation #6-2019 (Predator): The WRRB commits to striking a working group to begin work on a *sahcho* (grizzly bear) biological assessment by June 2019, specifically on the sahtì ekwò and kokètì ekwò herds herd ranges. This working group will include at minimum the GNWT, TG and the Government of Nunavut. WRRB staff recommend that *sahcho* are monitored in order to determine if pressures are increasing on ekwò.

Response:

ENR and TG accept the first half of this recommendation. ENR and TG will participate in a collaborative process to work on a *sahcho* biological assessment led by WRRB staff. ENR can provide information on *sahcho* from the Northwest Territories. In April 2017, the Northwest Territories Species at Risk Committee released the “Species Status Report for Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) in the Northwest Territories”, which includes both traditional knowledge and science. This status report provides a thorough biological assessment of *sahcho* within the NWT and should form a basis for the biological assessment.

As neither ENR nor TG have jurisdiction in Nunavut we are unable accept the second half of this recommendation as worded. Despite this, ENR can discuss potential *sahcho* monitoring in order to determine if pressures are increasing on ekwò with the Government of Nunavut. ENR and TG recognize that *sahcho* are an important predator on the calving and post-calving grounds of ekwò. As the majority of the calving grounds and post-calving ranges of the sahtì ekwò and kokètì ekwò herds are in Nunavut, monitoring the pressures of *sahcho* on ekwò will occur in Nunavut and be the responsibility of the Government of Nunavut.

The TG Boots on the Ground program is one method of tracking *sahcho* on the Bathurst range and in the future on the Bluenose-East range. *Sahcho* have been observed during the TG Boots on the Ground program.

Recommendation #7-2019 (Predator): WRRB staff recommend that *golden det'qcho* (golden eagle) are monitored in order to determine if pressures of golden det'qcho are increasing on ekwò. WRRB staff recommends that TG and the GNWT work with the Government of Nunavut to support golden det'qcho monitoring.

Response:

As neither ENR nor TG have jurisdiction in Nunavut we are unable accept the recommendation as worded. ENR and TG would like to vary this recommendation, as TG and ENR can discuss potential options for monitoring both golden det'qcho and bald eagles with the Government of Nunavut.

ENR and TG recognize that eagles and in particular golden det'qcho have been identified as a significant predator of caribou calves in other barren-ground caribou herds.

The TG Boots on the Ground program is one method of tracking eagles on the Bathurst range and in the future on the Bluenose-East range. Bald eagles have been observed during the TG Boots on the Ground program.