

December 19, 2024

Brett Wheler, A/Director
Culture and Lands Protection
Tłıchǫ Government
Email: brett.wheler@tlicho.ca

Heather Sayine-Crawford, Director
Environment and Climate Change
Government of the Northwest Territories
Email: heather_sayine-crawford@gov.nt.ca

Via Email
brett.wheler@tlicho.ca
heather_sayine-crawford@gov.nt.ca

Re: Kòk'èeti (Bathurst) Ekwò Management Action Extension

Dear Mr. Wheler & Ms. Sayine-Crawford:

As per section 12.5.1 of the Tłıchǫ Agreement, the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) considered the above-mentioned extension request from July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2027, submitted by the Tłıchǫ Government (TG) and the Government of the Northwest Territories, (GNWT) on December 2, 2024. TG and GNWT note that an extension of current management and monitoring actions to June 30, 2027 will allow for a new population estimate to be derived in June 2025 and will provide time to conduct community engagement and consultations with Elders in winter 2025/2026.

Based on the WRRB's Rule for Management Proposals, the WRRB determined it should undertake a Level 1 review as only an extension was requested. The joint management proposal extension request was posted to the WRRB's website on the Management Proposals page from December 2-10, 2024. No formal comments were submitted by the public.

For eight years, the Kòk'èeti Ekwò herd has remained stable and substantially below the Bathurst Caribou Herd Management Plan's critical low herd size (<30,000) despite the sacrifices of people across the herd's range. TG and GNWT offer no opinion or interpretation as to why the Kòk'èeti Ekwò herd is not recovering nor the risks of waiting at least two and a half years before potentially taking action.

During their recent December 2024 meeting, the WRRB noted that, in December 2023, they requested the submission of a new joint management proposal from TG and GNWT for review in December 2024 using existing information available. Additionally, the Board reminded TG and GNWT that public understanding about the reasons for the Kòk'èeti Ekwò population declines and the factors affecting the declines, including emigration, and the need for ɛekwò management actions is imperative given the relationship between Tłıchǫ communities and ɛekwò. The Board reiterated previous recommendation from 2022 to develop a plain language summary about Kòk'èeti Ekwò management for discussion in Tłıchǫ communities. The Board is disappointed that their recommendations were ignored, resulting in the need for a further extension of current management actions for the Kòk'èeti Ekwò herd.

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Following a lengthy deliberation, the Board agreed to approve the request to extend the Kòk'èeti Ekwò joint management proposal from July 1, 2025 to July 1, 2027 (WRRB Motion #955-17-12-2024).

As such, the existing management and monitoring actions from the WRRB's 2019 Bathurst Caribou Proceeding are expected to continue and be implemented until July 1, 2027:

- *Harvest Management* – The total allowable harvest and harvest management actions remain unchanged, including continued growth and implementation of the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è zekwò monitoring program and the Tìchq Ekwò Harvest Monitoring Program.
- *Predator Management* – The diga management program ended in spring 2024. A comprehensive collaborative review of the entire five-year program is now underway. If TG and GNWT determine additional predator management actions are warranted in the future, a joint management proposal must be submitted to the WRRB.
- *Habitat & Land Use* – Implementation of the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan and the Cumulative Effects Assessment of the Kòk'èeti Ekwò will continue, including analysis of the cumulative impacts of roads, industrial sites, and a warmer climate on Kòk'èeti Ekwò herd productivity and survival.
- *Education* – Education initiatives are ongoing.
- *Monitoring & Research* – Implementation of the monitoring actions from the WRRB's 2019 Bathurst Caribou Proceeding remain unchanged, with the exception of conducting a population survey in June 2025 and focusing on fall composition surveys only.

The Board notes that equal priority should be given to conducting fall and late winter composition surveys because measuring over-winter calf survival and determining an index for pregnancy rates is as important for the Board to make appropriate decisions as measuring fall calf survival and measuring the adult sex ratio for extrapolating the calving ground estimates.

Additionally, the Barren-ground Caribou Technical Working Group should undertake analysis and discussions related to climate change and adult survival; collaring and low survival; adult sex ratios; and older age structure of the herd.

The WRRB looks forward to continuing conversations with TG and GNWT and collaborating on implementation of the Kòk'èeti Ekwò management and monitoring actions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office.

Sincerely,



Joseph Judas
Chair

Cc Michael Birlea, Manager, Lands Protection & Renewable Resources
Culture and Lands Protection, Tìchq Government

Karin Clark, Manager, Wildlife Management Division
Environment and Climate Change, Government of the Northwest Territories