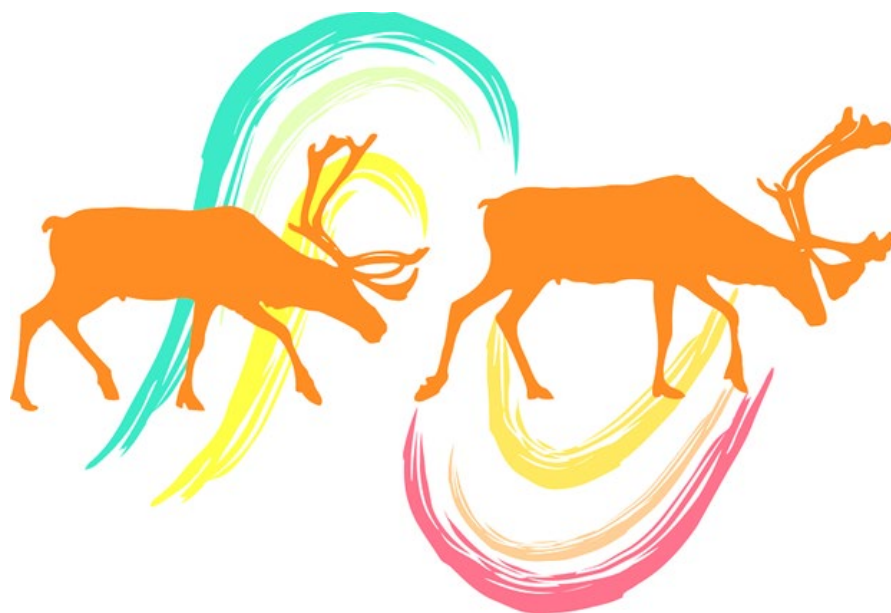


**ACCWM Annual Status Meeting Summary
November 2025**

**CAPE BATHURST CARIBOU
BLUENOSE-WEST CARIBOU
BLUENOSE-EAST CARIBOU**



**Prepared by the Advisory Committee for
Cooperation on Wildlife Management**

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About the ACCWM

The Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management was established to exchange information, help develop cooperation and consensus, and make recommendations regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat issues that cross land-claim and treaty boundaries. The committee consists of Chairpersons (or alternate appointees) of the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT), Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, Ɂehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board), Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board, Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, and Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board.

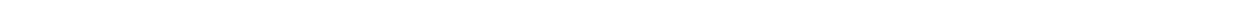


About *Taking Care of Caribou* and the associated Action Plans

In late 2014 and early 2015, members of the ACCWM approved *Taking Care of Caribou: The Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou Herds Management Plan*. The Plan was developed in consultation with 17 communities that harvest from the three herds. The intent is for the Plan to address caribou management and stewardship over the long term. It was presented to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (now Environment and Climate Change, Government of the Northwest Territories), the Minister of Environment (Government of Nunavut), and the Environment Minister (Government of Canada) in 2014. The Management Plan is supported by two companion documents: a report summarizing recent scientific information about the herds, and a report that provides a summary of the information that was shared during community meetings to develop the Plan. Individual Action Plans were then developed for each of the three herds. These Action Plans provide details on the types of actions that are recommended based on a herd's status, as well as who is responsible for the actions, and when they should be done.

Disclaimer:

The ACCWM recognizes that the implementation of management actions moving forward is subject to appropriations, prioritizations, and budgetary restraints of the participating agencies and organizations.



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Acronyms Used in This Plan

ACCWM (WG)	Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (Working Group)
CI	Confidence Interval
DCFN	Dehcho First Nation
DGG	Délı̄nē Got'ı̄nē Government
DoE	Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut
ECC	Department of Environment and Climate Change, GNWT
GN	Government of Nunavut
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
GRRB	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
GTC	Gwich'in Tribal Council
HTC	Hunters and Trappers Committee
HTO	Hunters and Trappers Organization
IGC	Inuvialuit Game Council
ISR	Inuvialuit Settlement Region
ITH	Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway
KAA	Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association
NTI	Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
NWMB	Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
NWT	Northwest Territories
PCA	Parks Canada Agency
RRC	Renewable Resource Council
SE	Standard Error
SRRB	Sahtú Renewable Resources Board
SSI	Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated
TAH	Total Allowable Harvest
TG	Tłı̄chq Government
TNNPMB	Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board
WEMP	Wildlife Effects Monitoring Plan
WMAC (NWT)	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories)
WRRB	Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board
WWHPP	Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan

Introduction

This **ACCWM Annual Status Meeting Summary** was developed by wildlife management boards with stewardship responsibilities for barren-ground caribou and their habitat in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.¹ It is part of a collaborative management planning process that has involved 17 communities in six land-claim areas over the past ten years. It is a companion document to the Action Plans describing the specific actions for each herd that will carry out the **principles** and goals outlined in *Taking Care of Caribou: The Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou Herds Management Plan (November 3, 2014)*. This document summarizes the traditional and local knowledge and scientific information presented at the 2025 Annual Status Meeting, methods used by the Boards to collect information for the monitoring tables, and other relevant information pertaining to the Annual Status Meeting.

Members of the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM) approved *Taking Care of Caribou* (the Management Plan) in late 2014 and early 2015. The ACCWM presented the Plan to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (now Environment and Climate Change, Government of the Northwest Territories), the Minister of Environment (Government of Nunavut), IGC, GTC, SSI, TG, DCFN, PCA (Western Arctic Field Unit), NTI and KAA in 2014. The intent is for the Plan to address management activities and caribou stewardship over the long term. The plan describes the consensus-based approach, herd definitions, principles, and goals that guided the process. It

Management Plan **principles**:

- Management decisions will respect treaties and land-claim agreements and Aboriginal harvesting rights in areas both with and without a land-claim agreement
- Management decisions will reflect the wise use of the herds in a sustainable manner
- Adequate habitat (quantity and quality) is fundamental to the welfare of the herds
- Management decisions will be based on the best available information – including science, as well as traditional and local knowledge – and will not be postponed in the absence of complete information
- Effective management requires participation, openness, and cooperation among all users and agencies responsible for the stewardship of the herds and their habitat. Shared use requires shared responsibility
- Harvests must be allocated in a manner which respects Aboriginal harvesting rights and the sustainable harvesting limit, if any, of each herd
- The impacts to caribou herds and their habitat must be anticipated and minimized
- Harvesting is fundamental to the cultural, social, spiritual, and economic well-being of the communities of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (*Taking Care of Caribou*, p. 12)

¹ Throughout the Management Plan and Action Plans, the terms ‘wildlife management boards’ or ‘Member Boards’ refer to the six boards which are members of the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management.

provides a framework for **Monitoring** the herds, making decisions, and taking action. Five different categories of management actions are outlined in the Plan, including **Education**, **Habitat**, **Land Use Activities**, **Predators**, and **Harvest Management**.

Separate Action Plans were developed for each of the three herds. These Action Plans lay out specific objectives, tasks, and priorities for the herds. They also provide further details on the parties responsible for management actions, as well as how and when these actions will be carried out. The Action Plans are based on the best current information available but are designed to be “living documents” to allow for the adjustment of tasks as new information becomes available. They are intended to be in place for three to five years but are reviewed annually and may be revised as needed. Action Plans for 2017/18 and 2018/19 were developed after the ASMs. In 2018, the ACCWM decided to write a meeting summary and then separate action plans that focus on the action tables for each herd.

The ultimate goal of the ACCWM *Taking Care of Caribou Process* (the Management Plan, Annual Status Meeting Activities, Meeting Summary, and the Action Plans) is to ensure that there are caribou for today and for future generations.

The management goals are to:

- Maintain herds within the known natural range of variation,
- Conserve and manage caribou habitat, and
- Ensure that harvesting is respectful and sustainable (*Taking Care of Caribou*, p. 12).

Management and Action Planning Overview

Stewardship planning for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East caribou herds is founded on an “adaptive management cycle.” This means that there are ongoing efforts to monitor and assess the results of management actions, adapt when things aren’t working well, use what is learned to shape future actions, and share that information with others. This is an important process in being able to gauge the success of management actions. Figure 1 shows a diagram of the adaptive management cycle.

Issues thought to be affecting barren-ground caribou have been identified collaboratively through both scientific research and community engagement. Certain factors,

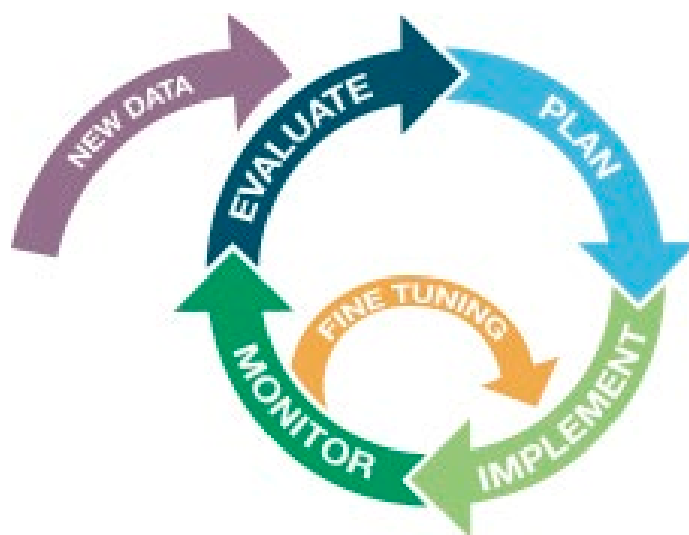


Figure 1: Diagram showing the process of an adaptive management cycle (figure from Weeks, R., and S. Jupiter. 2013. *Adaptive Comanagement of a Marine Protected Area Network in Fiji*. *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 27, No. 6: 1234-1244.)

such as climate change, are difficult to influence, but all require cooperation and coordination for effective action. The Management Plan was developed because the ACCWM identified a need to:

- Develop a cooperative approach to management for the herds,
- Protect the habitat in the herds' range, and
- Make decisions on the shared harvests in an open and fair manner (*Taking Care of Caribou*, p. 6).

Hot topics presented in the Management Plan include:

- Defining Caribou Herds
- Exchange or Movement between Caribou Herds
- Caribou Collaring
- Perspectives on Harvesting and Harvest Monitoring
- Predator Control Programs
- Priorities for Harvest Allocation
- Cow vs. Bull Harvests

The Management Plan provides an overall framework for how this cooperation can take place. An inclusive, consensus-based approach is used at all stages of the planning process. Sometimes, management topics can be controversial and coming to an agreement is challenging. To honour differing perspectives yet still move ahead with planning, it was decided to be transparent about differences and acknowledge them as unresolved **“hot topics”** that are likely to require further work. To increase understanding and help us remain aware and respectful of differences in points of view throughout the planning cycle, the Action Plans

Sharing Perspectives: Naming Caribou

Each Indigenous region in NWT and Nunavut has a traditional name for barren-ground caribou. Some within the Bluenose-East range include: tuktuvialuk, tuktut, ɬedə, ɬekwé, and ekwò in Inuvialuktun, Inuinnaqtun, K'áhsho Got'İne/Dela Got'İne, Délİne Got'İne, and Tłıchq dialects and languages. Indigenous names are mostly based on an understanding that 'caribou are caribou' – that is, that there are no real differences amongst herds. As a result, Indigenous names tend not to reflect scientific understandings or naming protocols of distinct herds based on calving grounds.

To coordinate management actions across different regions, we needed to develop a shared understanding of which caribou we were talking about. ACCWM members agreed to use the scientific definition of three herds and prepare separate action plans with specific management directives for Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East caribou. The framework and principles laid out in the Management Plan apply to the entire range of the three herds together.

These differences in language and points of view can lead, at times, to confusion in co-management settings. As a result, some Indigenous communities are developing more specific terms to differentiate among herds. For example, Délİne has suggested ɬehdaɬla Goɬekwé as an appropriate Délİne Got'İne term for barren-ground caribou within the Bluenose-East range. Similarly, the Tłıchq term Sahtı ɬekwò more clearly describes caribou within the area of Sahtı (Great Bear Lake).

While it is acknowledged and respected that the use of correct Indigenous names can help to convey traditional understandings of caribou, as these Action Plans span several regions, incorporating first languages into the main body of the plans is challenging. As the ACCWM refines the action planning process and regions expand their inputs, inclusion of Indigenous languages and perspectives may evolve over time.

include information on **“sharing perspectives.”** These are glimpses into some of the ways in which our culture, training, or beliefs influence our approach to management or our worldview. They are based on discussions that arose during planning and are intended to provide further insights into the ‘hot topics’ described in the Management Plan.

Each ACCWM Member Board is responsible for approving Action Plans for implementation within its region. Once an Action Plan is approved, it is submitted to the appropriate governments and other parties for implementation. All Member Boards recognize that implementation of the Action Plans needs to be collaborative, and are effective only with community input and support.

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management** was established in 2008 to exchange information, help develop cooperation and consensus, and make recommendations regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat issues that cross land-claim and treaty boundaries. The chairpersons of six wildlife management boards make up the ACCWM.

The ACCWM Member Boards have authority through land claim and other agreements to make recommendations and decisions on wildlife management issues. Under their mandates, the boards have responsibility for wildlife and wildlife habitat management. The ACCWM can work toward consensus-based recommendations to governments regarding caribou management actions. However, ACCWM recommendations do not prohibit individual boards from providing additional recommendations, nor are individual boards bound by ACCWM recommendations.

The **Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management** consists of the Chairpersons (or alternate appointees) of:

- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (WMAC (NWT))
- Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB)
- ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB))
- Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board (WRRB)
- Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB), and
- Tukut Nogait National Park Management Board (TNNPMB)

Early in 2015, the ACCWM established a Working Group to prepare draft Action Plans for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds. The members of this Working Group are included in **Appendix A**. It is important to note that the success of the Management Plan and associated Action Plans is not just the responsibility of the ACCWM and its Working Group but also relies on the cooperation of multiple partners. Potential government partners include the Government of the Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut, Parks Canada Agency, Tłıchq Government, and other Aboriginal Governments. Regional partners, which vary significantly by region, may include individual community members, community organizations such as Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs), Hunters and Trappers Committees and Organizations (HTCs and HTOs), and regional organizations.

How a Herd's Status and Appropriate Management Actions Are Determined

The ACCWM is responsible for determining herd status each year and developing appropriate management actions based on that status. Each fall, the Member Boards meet to share information and make collaborative decisions regarding the herds, according to the requirements of regional legislation and land-claims agreements. The implementation of the Action Plans is also reviewed at this time. The Annual Status Meeting is an opportunity for the ACCWM to invite authorized representatives of management agencies such as Environment and Climate Change (GWNT-ECC), Parks Canada, and the Government of Nunavut, as well as harvesters, the public, and researchers to get together and discuss the best available information about the caribou. Terms of reference for the meeting are included in **Appendix B**.

New information presented and reviewed at the annual status meeting may include that from monitoring and research programs, as well as community and/or traditional knowledge. Herd status is determined based on information that includes several **monitoring indicators**. Decisions are also influenced by other information from harvesters and scientists.

Scientists and traditional knowledge-holders recognize that caribou populations tend to go up and down in cycles that usually last between 30 and 60 years. The Management Plan and Action Plans rely on a “traffic light” approach to indicate the relative levels of risk associated with the different phases of a population cycle. The levels are colour-coded as follows:

Monitoring indicators used to assess herd status include:

- Population size
- Population trend and rate of change
- Productivity and recruitment
- Adult composition
- Body condition and health
- Harvest levels
- Predator populations
- Range and movement patterns
- Environment and habitat
- Human disturbance



yellow: the population level is **intermediate and increasing**



green: the population level is **high**



orange: the population level is **intermediate and decreasing**



red: the population level is **low**

Management actions are based on these phases of the population cycle, using approximate levels or “thresholds” as a guide. Thresholds for the herds were determined by the ACCWM based on known historic highs and lows, with input received from community and technical experts in a consensus-based process. **However, it is not only the threshold value that is used**

to determine the colour zone – the determination of herd status takes into account all available information. The traffic light approach to understanding risk in caribou population cycles is shown in Figure 2.

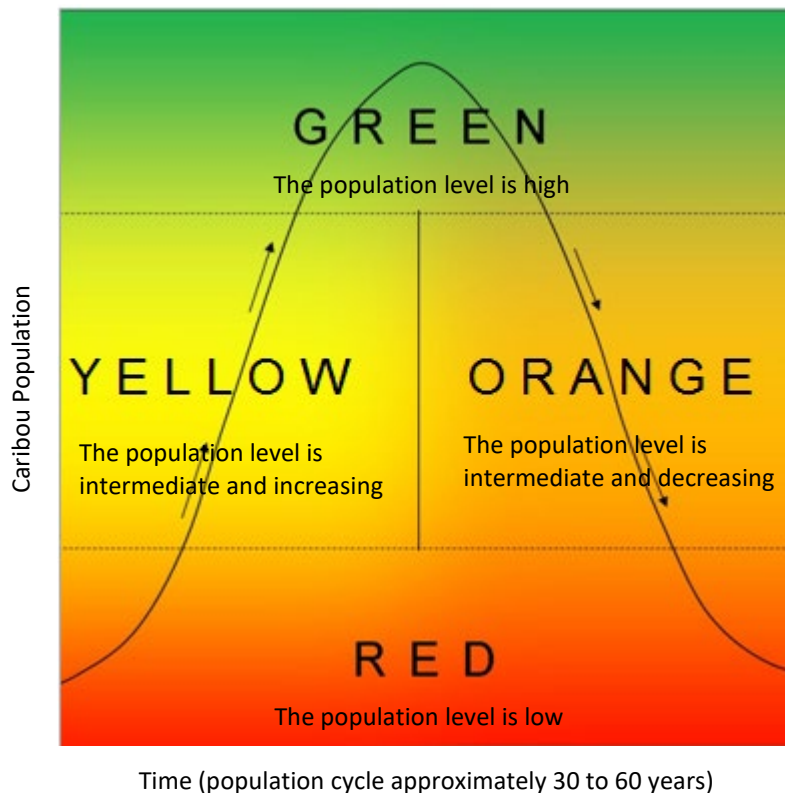


Figure 2: Phases of the population cycle with the colour-coded "traffic light" approach used in the Management Plan and associated Action Plans.

Setting herd status helps provide guidance to implementers about the appropriate monitoring and management actions that should be taking place at each population level. Once herd status is set, the Action Plan includes details about the appropriate prioritized actions, their objectives, and what specific tasks will be done, by whom, and within what timeframe.

Communications

For the Management Plan to be successful in achieving its goal of having caribou today and for future generations, people need to know about the Plan, the management actions, and related activities. Without

successful communication, we cannot expect people to be engaged, informed, active participants in *Taking Care of Caribou*.

Communication about the ACCWM and its processes and outputs will include efforts from the ACCWM as a collective and its individual Member Boards, the territorial governments, local resource management organizations such as HTC, HTO, and RRC, as well as individuals at the family and community level. There are special requirements for effective communication in the NWT and Nunavut, as it is an immense geographical area that crosses territorial boundaries and numerous regions with diverse cultures and environments. There is also a wide diversity of management institutions operating at different scales from the local to the national. **Appendix C** includes a detailed **Communication Plan**.

CAPE BATHURST CARIBOU

— *YELLOW STATUS* —



Tuktuvialuk (Inuvialuktun, Sallirmiutun dialect)
Vadzaih (Teet'it and Gwichya Gwich'in)

Understanding Current Cape Bathurst Herd Status

The ACCWM met on November 18th 2025, to review information pertaining to the status of the Cape Bathurst caribou herd. Prior to that, Member Boards reviewed information available and held discussions in preparation for the annual status meeting. During status meeting discussions about Cape Bathurst caribou, scientific knowledge was provided by ECC-GNWT biologists. Community knowledge was provided from two regions: the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) and the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA).

The 2025 Management Setting

At the start of the 2025 status meeting, the attendees were asked to provide a brief update on some of the management actions and developments that arose in their region over the past year. These are largely summarised in the management action table found in the Cape Bathurst 2025 Action Plan.

In addition to the management concerns presented at the meeting, there are several items that could have implications for Cape Bathurst caribou including:

- **Species at Risk Assessments:** COSEWIC has assessed barren-ground caribou as Threatened. The federal SARA listing has not been undertaken yet. Depending on the listings, work on recovery planning and identification of critical habitat may need to happen.
- **Caribou Recovery Strategy:** The NWT Barren-ground Caribou recovery strategy recommends objectives for the conservation and recovery of caribou. It also recommends approaches to achieve those objectives. It includes a description of threats and positive influences on the species and its habitat.²
- **Completion of the ITH:** The highway opened in November 2017 and may be leading to increased access to Cape Bathurst caribou on their winter range and problems with dust on vegetation. ECC is using existing collars and monitoring data to analyze the impacts of the road on caribou.

Status Decision 2025

Management actions are based on these phases of the population cycle, using approximate levels or “thresholds” as a guide. Thresholds for the herds were determined by the ACCWM based on known historic highs and lows, with input received from community and technical experts in a consensus-based process. **However, it is not only the threshold value that is used to determine the colour zone – the determination of herd status takes into account all available information.** The traffic light approach to understanding risk in caribou population cycles is shown in Figure 3 along with the approximate thresholds for the Cape Bathurst (CB) herd.

² https://www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca/sites/species/files/barren-ground_caribou_recovery_strategy_final_8april2020.pdf

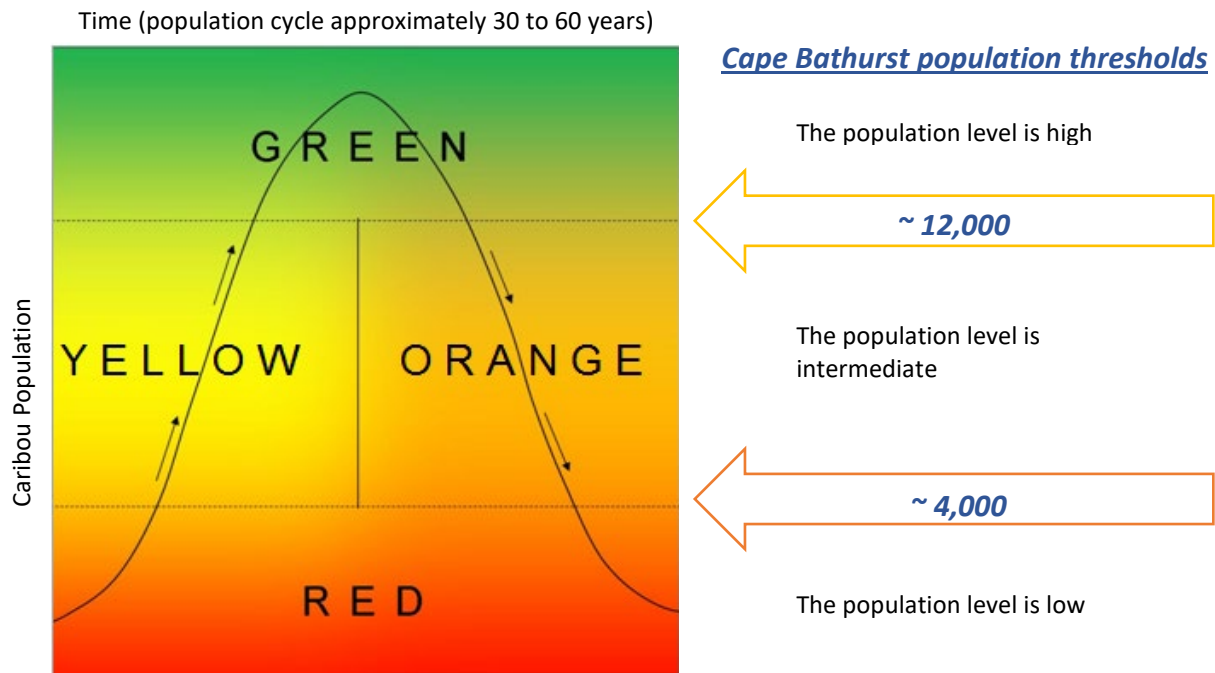


Figure 3: Phases of the population cycle with the colour-coded "traffic light" approach used in the Management Plan and associated Action Plans with defined Cape Bathurst population thresholds.

According to the process outlined in the Management Plan, numerous criteria are used to make an annual status decision. Information considered by the ACCWM in making the 2025 decision is summarized in Table 6 below. During the annual status meeting, stakeholders are encouraged to provide important local and Indigenous knowledge that helps to inform the status decision.

In 2026/27



the Cape Bathurst caribou population status is

Yellow: intermediate and increasing

Based on the information provided, the ACCWM determined the Cape Bathurst herd status colour zone to be **Yellow (intermediate and increasing)** in November 2025. The ACCWM noted that the population continues to show positive signs of recovering based on the community observations presented and this year's population survey. Based on the available

information, the ACCWM felt that there was sufficient evidence for status of the herd to be maintained at **Yellow (intermediate and increasing)**.

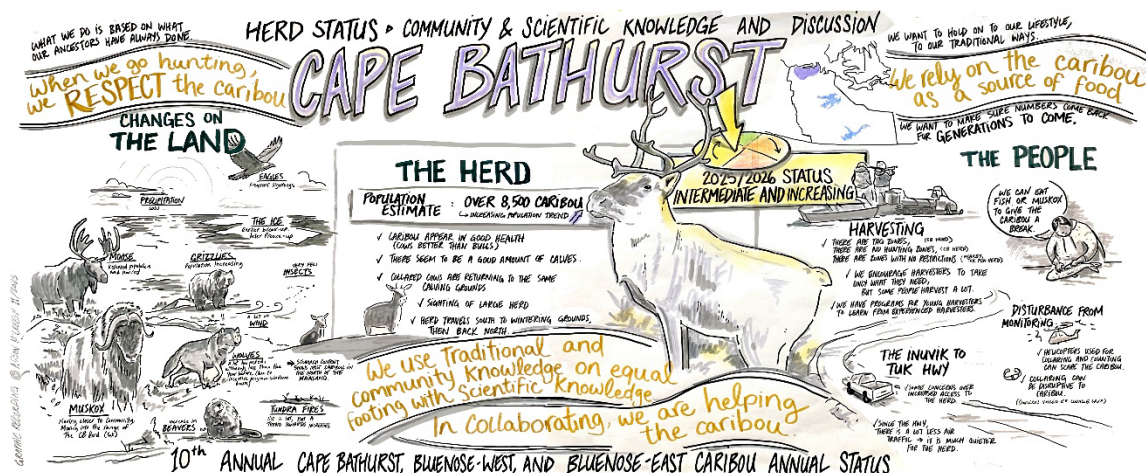


Figure 4: Graphic recording of the Cape Bathurst Knowledge presentations. Credit: Alison McReesh.

Presentations Given at the 2025 Annual Status Meeting

Both scientific and community knowledge helped to inform the 2025 status decision; further details on some of the relevant survey methods are included in **Appendix D**. ECC provided the most recent scientific information; the data included here were presented at the meeting.

Some community information was provided on each of the ten monitoring criteria. The following outlines regional approaches to gathering information:

Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), NWT – Information provided for this region was summarized from the public meetings held in Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik and Paulatuk during a community tour with representatives from WMAC (NWT)

Gwich'in Settlement Area, NWT – The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board conducts interviews with harvesters. Currently, few Gwich'in members are harvesting from this herd, as such the data provided is sourced from a small group of harvesters.

Representatives of other regions did not provide information specific to Cape Bathurst monitoring, as people living in those areas did not regularly encounter or use these caribou.

Inuvialuit Community Knowledge Presentation

Jessica Norris (Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT))

Jessica's portion of this presentation focused mainly on the data presented in the monitoring criteria table (see Table 6 below). This data came from the WMAC community tour meetings held in Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk.

Hunters in the Tuktoyaktuk area reported notable increases in caribou herds and calf sightings, especially during the fall, indicating a stable population trend without significant concerns for productivity or recruitment. Inuvik community members echoed these observations, affirming that the caribou appear healthy, and no issues were raised concerning adult body condition.

Predator population dynamics were highlighted as well, with rising numbers of grizzly bears and increased sightings of eagles, while wolf harvest levels have also risen.

Concerns about environmental and habitat conditions were voiced, particularly regarding the impact of climate change on food sources and migration patterns, which were of heightened concern for Inuvik community members. They also noted late freeze-ups and low precipitation affecting the habitat over the past year. Additionally, human disturbances were addressed; Inuvik residents expressed worries over inexperienced hunters and increased access along the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway, where new camps have been established.

Furthermore, competition among wildlife was discussed, with reports of an increasing moose harvest and musk oxen moving closer to communities. Beavers have also been observed expanding their presence in the region. This year's community meetings served as seasonal outreach efforts, allowing for public participation and presentations on these various ecological and community-related topics, fostering ongoing dialogue about the region's wildlife and environmental changes.

James Pokiak added:

There's six different communities under that claim. So, the information that we gathered, a lot of it comes from the harvesters that are very most of them are really good about giving information out as to numbers seen and whatnot. One of the biggest things we've been experiencing the past number of years is later freeze ups, earlier break up just last week, when I came home from Ocean was still wide open. It's starting to freeze over now, so we're probably two and a half weeks behind the normal freeze up this time of year.

Adam Bathe asked if there were any observations about changes in insect populations and the effects they have on caribou.

James Pokiak responded:

One of the things we've noticed in my community also is there's a lot less mosquitoes around during the summer months, and we're getting a lot more wind, high water, stuff like that. So, the insects that are up there, we rarely see them anymore. You know, we got an area where we go harvest the beluga whale for subsistence use. And normally you got to have a net on all the time. But the past seven, eight years or so, it's completely changed.

Gwich'in Community Knowledge Presentation

Steve Andersen (Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board)

This presentation focused mainly on the data presented in the monitoring criteria table (see Table 6 below). The presentation was led by Steve Andersen, the wildlife biologist for the GRRB.

At this time most community members are harvesting from the Porcupine Caribou herd so there is limited interaction with the Cape Bathurst herd. This leads to a smaller pool of harvesters from the other herds, necessitating individual interviews by the GRRB rather than larger public meetings, a method found to be more effective in this context.

Of the 15 known harvesters of the Bluenose-West herd, the GRRB was able to contact 14 of them and 8 responded to the request for an interview. At the time when these harvesters are able to access the Bluenose-West herd, they are mixing with Cape Bathurst herd. As such the observations shared below were applied to the both the Cape Bathurst and Bluenose-West herd sections during the annual meeting.

Among the respondents, two reported successful harvests while others faced challenges, including one individual who had attempted to hunt three times without success. Feedback indicated that the population of caribou appeared stable, with reports of healthy animals and ample calf tracks suggesting good productivity and recruitment. Harvest levels were noted to be consistent with previous years, though the hunting season began later than usual. Predator populations also showed an upward trend.

Regarding movement patterns, some harvesters remarked that caribou have not been migrating as far south as in the past, with observations indicating changes in their traditional range. Environmental impacts from fire were acknowledged, though no significant human disturbances were reported.

A community member noted that there were lots of calf tracks this year which may be a good sign for productivity.

One harvester reported that the caribou's movements were similar to other years while two people said that caribou aren't going as far south as they used to.

"In past years [people] used to harvest Bluenose Caribou when they came into the Travaillant Lake area, east of here. Last few years the herd seems to stop at the Kugaluk River area, not sure why, probably due [to a] few large fires in the Travaillant and Tenlen Lakes area."

"They don't seem to be coming as far south and into the timber anymore like they used to, but maybe my timing wasn't the best." (He was hunting north of Sitidgi Lake in March and April 2025.)

Presentation on Scientific Information

Tracy Davison (Environment and Climate Change-Government of the NWT)

ECC was able to conduct a post-calving ground survey in 2025³. Tracy noted that last year there were some issues with estimating the herd size. The main issue with the caribou population estimate is the distribution of the herd. Large aggregations were observed at the top of Cape Bathurst, but some collared individuals remained in smaller groups to the south suggesting many caribou did not aggregate. This likely led to an overestimation, as aggregated groups were well counted, but others may have been missed. According to Tracy, the reduction in the estimated population seen between 2024 and 2025 is because of last year’s over estimate and confidence intervals overlap therefor don’t think there was a actual decline in the population Therefore, ECC is still confident that the population trend indicates recovery, placing the herd solidly in the "yellow" status.

Table 1: CB Rivest population estimates (2000–2025).

Year	Rivest Estimate
2025	8,533 ± 1,413
2024	9,702 ± 2,425
2021	4,912 ± 562
2018	4,521 ± 875
2015	2,524 ± 284
2012	2,447 ± 350
2009	2,925 ± 1,252
2006	2,039 ± 319
2005	3,566 ± 1,373
2000	13,612 ± 5,245

The population survey results (the number of adult caribou) were:

Adult Population Estimate: 8,533 ± 1,413 (95% CI)

Population trend and rate of change

The 2025 Rivest population estimate of 8,533 ± 1,413 caribou (95% CI) is significantly higher than the previous 2021 estimate. This represents a 20% increase in population per year between since 2021 and the 2025. This is near upper limit of growth for caribou herds. The herd has been

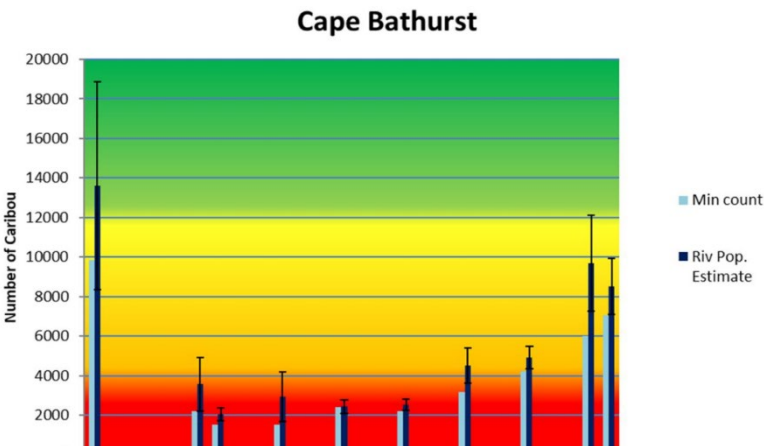


Figure 5: Cape Bathurst herd Rivest population estimates from post-calving surveys since 2000. Minimum counts are included for comparison purposes.

³ The post-calving population survey results were used to calculate the size of the Cape Bathurst herd by using the Rivest method instead of the historically utilized Lincoln-Peterson method. Of the two population estimation methods, ECC and the boards agreed at the 2016 meeting that the Rivest is the preferred estimation method, as it takes into account group size along with the data from collars and photo surveys.

relatively stable between 2005 and 2015 at low numbers. Rivist population estimates (with 95% confidence intervals) as well as minimum counts for the period from 2000 to 2025 are shown in Table 1 and Figure 5.

Productivity and recruitment

The following information was presented in previous years.

During collaring in 2024, biologists collect blood samples. They were able to collect samples from 12 caribou and found that 75% were considered pregnant based on the level of progesterone found in the blood. This is a lower rate of pregnancy than what is expected with and increasing population. The small sample size may be impacting this estimate.

A recruitment survey was completed in 2019. This data was presented at the 2019 ACCWM meeting. The 2020 survey was cancelled due to COVID-19.

Recruitment surveys show the number of calves that have survived their first winter to be “recruited” into the adult population. This can vary greatly from year to year; in harder winters, fewer calves will survive. Generally, ratios of greater than 30 calves per 100 cows are considered good.

Recruitment surveys were conducted on Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou together in 2017, as the herds are mixed during the survey period; a very high ratio of 41 ± 6.7 (95% CI) calves to 100 cows was found. Recruitment estimates (number of calves per 100 cows) over time are shown in Figure 6. In the years 1983–1994, “Bluenose” includes Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East.

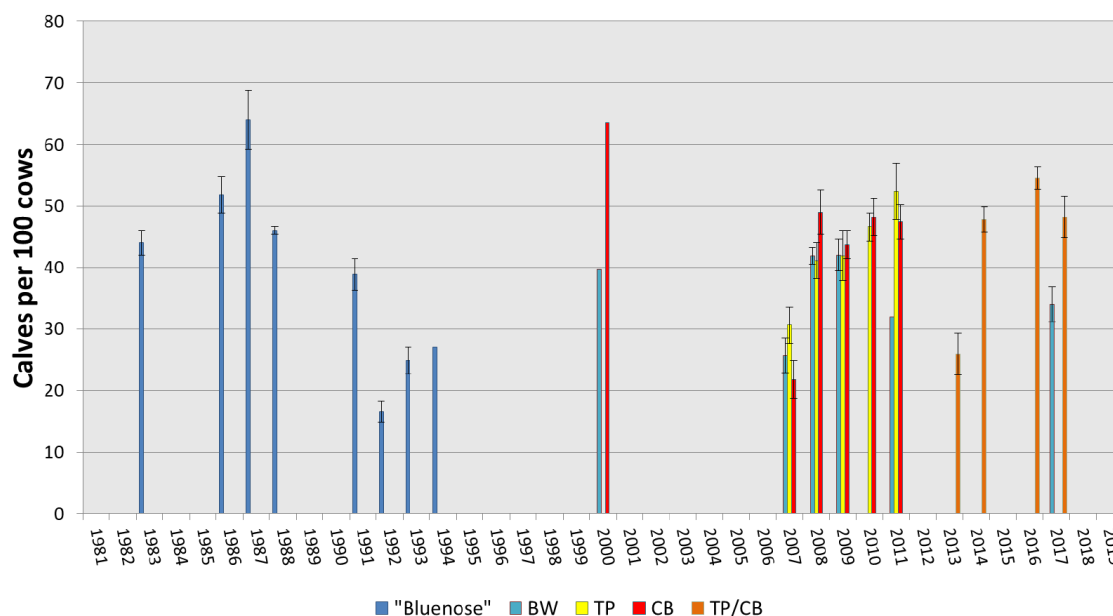


Figure 6: Recruitment estimates (calves per 100 cows) for the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula (TP), Cape Bathurst (CB), and “Bluenose” barren-ground caribou herds, 1983–2019.

Calf-to-cow ratios can be impacted by the harvesting of females. For example, if a large proportion of cows are harvested and the calves are not, then the number of calves per 100 cows left in the herd will be inflated and will be an inaccurate reflection of actual calf survival. Based on the management actions, a portion of the range used by the caribou in the survey is closed to harvest; however, the total harvest and sex ratio of the harvest are not known for the open area. Therefore, it is possible that the calf-to-cow ratio may be skewed. Good harvest data, including the sex of the animals, date of harvest, and location, is needed to better assess the impact of this harvest on the calf-to-cow ratios.

Adult composition

No new data on adult composition was provided during this year's status meeting.

A survey was attempted in the fall of 2021 but was cancelled due to weather. Data from previous years was presented and is summarised below.

A fall composition survey was conducted in October/November of 2015 as part of the monitoring program for the Cape Bathurst herd. Fall surveys to classify caribou are conducted during the rut to obtain a bull-to-cow ratio. Information is presented as the number of bulls per 100 cows.

The number of bulls per 100 cows was 43 ± 4.6 (SE) for the Cape Bathurst and Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula herds combined in 2015. There are no fall composition data from these herds to use for comparison. The 2009 results for the Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East herds showed bull-to-cow ratios of 70 and 42.9 ± 3.4 (SE) respectively.

Body condition and health

ECC monitors body condition and health in barren-ground caribou by working with harvesters. Harvesters are asked to measure back fat and to rate the body condition of the caribou they harvest as Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor. These ratings are translated to a numerical value between one and four, with 1 = Poor and 4 = Excellent, so they can be averaged. Scientific information is based on harvester reports and samples for the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst herds combined.

Table 2: Results from hunter harvest body condition sampling for Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou combined.

Season	Average Condition Code (Number of samples)	
	Female	Male
2025/25*	2.85 (55)	2.38 (16)
2023/24*	2.4 (86)	2.3 (34)
2022/23*	2.3 (41)	2.1 (16)
2021/22*	2.5 (ND)	2.6 (ND)
2020/21*	3.2 (55)	2.9 (19)
2019/20*	2.7 (83)	2.4 (44)
2018/19*	3.1 (32)	2.9 (34)
2017/18*	2.7 (70)	2.2 (34)
2016/17*	2.6 (74)	2.0 (44)
2015/16*	2.0 (57)	2.3 (27)
2014/15*	3.2 (40)	2.3 (28)
2013/14	2.7 (26)	3.2 (15)
2012/13	2.1 (10)	(0)
2011/12	(0)	(0)

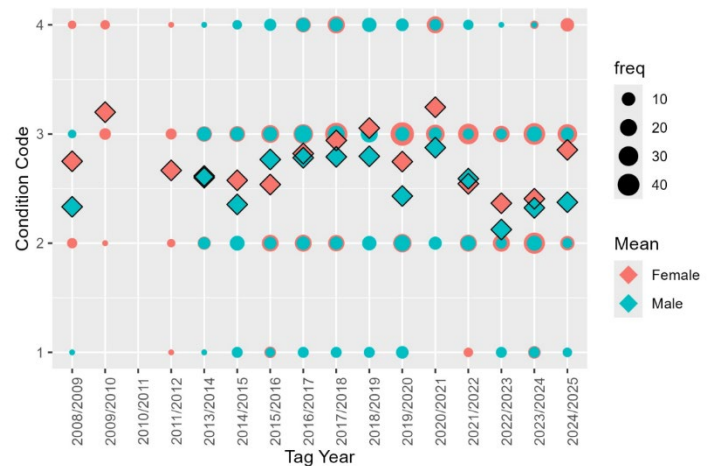


Figure 7: Average condition codes for the Tuk Peninsula/Cape Bathurst herds, assessed by hunters on a scale of 1–4 with the number of samples noted at the top of the bar.

* Samples submitted from I/BC/08 harvests plus from 2014/15 to present include I/BC/06 samples from Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk because, based on collar data, the change of zone boundary means Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters were mainly accessing Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst Herds.

In 2025, average condition was reported as slightly higher than in 2024 for both males and females but notable thing from last winter is cow condition was a lot higher than bull condition (Average 2025 condition codes: 2.85 female, 2.38 males). Back fat and bone marrow measurements were a little higher for females and little lower for males than the range of what has been seen over the last several years.

Table 3: Results from hunter-collected back fat and health sampling for the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou herds combined.

Season	Back Fat in cm (number of samples)	
	Female	Male
2024/25	2.4 (55)	0.95 (16)
2023/24	1.29 (89)	1.26 (29)
2022/23	1.3 (45)	1.41 (11)
2021/22	1.2 (ND)	1.31 (ND)
2020/21	2.13 (55)	1.90(19)
2019/20	1.42(68)	0.95(56)
2018/19*	1.28 (32)	1.24 (34)
2017/18*	1.90 (80)	0.72 (26)
2016/17*	1.43 (76)	0.73 (45)
2015/16*	2.7 (65)	1.06 (30)
2014/15*	2.13 (37)	1.21 (37)
2013/14	1.31 (25)	3.42 (18)
2012/13	1.22 (6)	(0)
2011/12	(0)	(0)
2010/11	(0)	4.03 (4)
2009/10	0.62 (10)	0.25 (2)
2008/09	0.8 (11)	0.00 (7)

* Samples submitted from I/BC/08 harvests plus from 2014/15 to present include I/BC/06 samples from Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk because, based on collar data, the change of zone boundary means Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters were mainly accessing Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst Herds

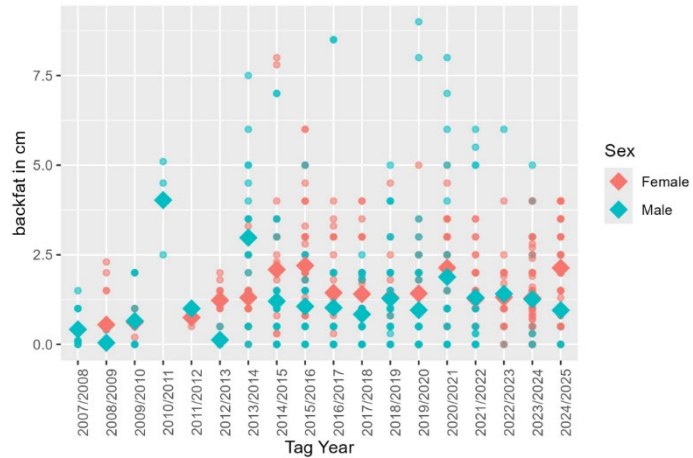


Figure 8: Reported back fat measurement (in centimetres) and average (diamond). Includes: I/BC/08 harvests plus from 14/15 to present harvest by Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters

Table 4: Results from marrow fat sampling for the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou herds combined.

Season	Marrow Fat % (Number of samples)	
	Female	Male
2023/24	89 (91)	87 (40)
2022/23	91 (29)	82 (19)
2021/22	80.5	84.6
2020/21	90.2(55)	89.9 (19)
2019/20	90 (68)	82 (56)
2018/19*	88.8 (32)	89.7 (34)
2017/18*	86.7 (77)	84.7 (37)
2016/17*	85.8 (73)	82.3 (50)
2015/16*	78.4 (24)	84.5 (16)
2014/15*	89.3(27)	87.4(30)
2013/14	90.0(21)	90.7(9)

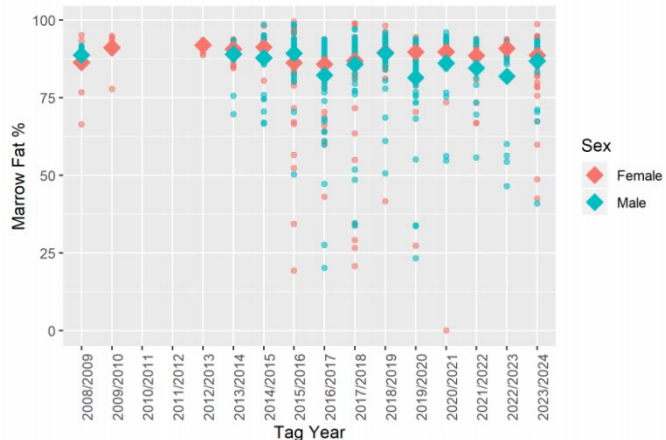


Figure 9: Marrow fat percent and average (diamond). Includes: I/BC/08 harvests plus from 14/15 to present harvest by Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters.

Results for average body condition ratings for Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou herds combined are presented in Table 2 and Figure 7.

Back fat measurements for Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou herds combined are presented in Table 3 and Figure 8. Marrow fat measurements are shown in Table 4 and Figure 9.

Harvest levels

Determining harvest levels for the Cape Bathurst herd remains complicated due to changes in management zone boundaries. Before 2005 the harvest between Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik was estimated at 1,600 caribou, with the majority being cows. In 2007, the mainland caribou management area in the ISR – area I/BC/06 was adjusted to reflect core areas of the herds based on recommendations from the WMAC (NWT). Area I/BC/06 was divided into three zones: I/BC/08 to reflect the core area of the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula herd; I/BC/07 to reflect the core area of the Cape Bathurst herd; and I/BC/06 to reflect the core portion of the Bluenose-West herd in the ISR.

In 2007, harvesting was closed in I/BC/07 and G/BC/02 based on recommendations from the WMAC (NWT) and the GRRB. Harvesting in I/BC/08 was closed seasonally from April 15 to June 15 to allow the Cape Bathurst herd to migrate to the calving grounds.

In 2009, the boundary between the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula area (I/BC/08) and Cape Bathurst area (I/BC/07) was moved south to the Diamond Lake Trail to make it simpler for harvesters to identify the zone boundary out on the land. At the same time, the seasonal closure was extended to April 1 to protect migrating Cape Bathurst caribou.

In 2014/15, the eastern boundary of I/BC/07 was moved to Husky Lakes; the adjustment of the Bluenose-West zone meant that it now included some of the range of the Cape Bathurst and Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula herds as well as Bluenose-West range. Concerns were raised by the GRRB that tags originally issued as part of a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for Bluenose-West caribou are now being used in an area with Cape Bathurst caribou, which could be impacting the Cape Bathurst herd. The Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula herd has also started coming into the expanded area of I/BC/06 in the winter, where the tags can be used. It is difficult to tell which herd the harvested animals in this expanded area of the I/BC/06 zone are from; Cape Bathurst, Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula, and some Bluenose-West herds all use this expanded area.

Sex was reported for 56 of the caribou harvested (35 females and 21 males)

Predator populations

ECC collects samples from wolves harvested by hunters in the Inuvik Region (Table 5); samples are mostly from the winter season when wolves tend to be hunted. It should be noted that the harvest numbers are only based on what was submitted to ECC and can vary a lot from the actual wolf harvest. In the past, stomach contents were sampled, and of all the Inuvik region mainland wolf samples submitted at that time, 68% of the stomach contents were caribou. ECC

is now looking at a more long-term analysis using stable isotopes, which will provide information on more than just wolves' most recent meal (e.g., will reveal more information about wolves' year-round diet).

Other scientific information

- Historically, 98% of collared Cape Bathurst cows (226/262) have returned to the same calving grounds year after year between 2010 and 2024. This year 19 collared individuals returned to the Cape Bathurst calving grounds, and one switched to the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula calving grounds.
- The largest habitat disturbance is the new highway. Now that it has been open for a couple of years, ECC is using the collars and monitoring data to assess any impacts. This will be presented when complete. Wildfire is a very small disturbance factor to the range of the Cape Bathurst herd.
- The Cumulative Effects project is ongoing; initial steps to map all current disturbances in the range show that there is a low human footprint on the range (less than 0.4% of the range)
- Competitors – A muskox survey was done in 2021, with more of them in the western part of the CB range, and on the Tuk Pen. More muskoxen are being seen in the region.

Table 5: Number of wolf carcasses/samples submitted to ECC by Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik hunters, 2007–2023.

Year	Inuvik	Tuktoyaktuk
2007/2008	20	8
2008/2009	11	22
2009/2010	15	12
2010/2011	24	16
2011/2012	21	15
2012/2013	16	15
2013/2014	19	14
2014/2015	17	23
2015/2016	33	21
2016/2017	8	21
2017/2018	21	9
2018/2019	29	0
2019/2020	14	9
2020/2021	15	6
2021/2022	19	6
2022/2023	20	8
2023/2024	28	31
2024/2025	28	31

Discussion

- Reindeer Competition:** Robert Charlie-Tetlichic asked about competition between caribou and reindeer populations. Tracy mentioned reindeer populations are controlled. There is potential competition as their ranges overlap in winter, and some reindeer do escape from the managed herd. Robert suggested collaring reindeer for tracking.
- Muskox Populations:** Tracy stated the last muskox survey (2021) showed a stable population of around 2,000, though their distribution is shifting westward. Robert noted a small herd near Tsiigehtchic. Larry Adjun mentioned muskox are expanding westward from the Coppermine River, with a healthy population and abundant grizzlies.
- Reindeer Identification & Movement:** Attendees discussed how reindeer can be visually distinguished from caribou by colour and that there are differences in calving times, with reindeer calving in March-April and caribou in May-June.
- Caribou & Predator Interactions:** Attendees discussed predator dynamics, particularly wolves and grizzlies. Wolves tend to follow caribou, and some years see more wolves around reindeer. It was noted that grizzlies can kill up to 20 fawns at a time. It was

suggested that there should be incentives to reduce grizzly populations due to their impact on caribou.

Table 6: Criteria used to assess Cape Bathurst herd status in 2025⁴

Criteria	Community-Based Information ⁵	Scientific Information ⁶	Comments
Population size	Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - Some hunters reported seeing large herds and increased calf sightings, especially in fall. GRRB: - One person reported that the herd's population is similar to past years.	Estimated number of adult caribou in 2025 Rivest: 8,533 ± 1,413 (95%CI)	Estimated based on July post-calving ground survey
Population trend and rate of change	Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - Some hunters report large herds. No concerns were raised. GRRB: - One respondent reported that the population is stable.	Between 2021 and 2025 the herd shows an increasing trend of 25% per year (95%CI of 2% to 9%) which is near upper limit of growth for caribou herds	Trend analysis is based on Rivest estimates and 2024 estimate may be biased high 2025 8,533 ± 1,413 (95%CI) 2024 9,702 ± 2,425 2021 4,912 ± 562 (95%CI) 2018 4,521 ± 875 2015 2,524 ± 284 2012 2,447 ± 350 2009 2,925 ± 1,252

⁴ This table is populated with information presented to the ACCWM to assess herd status in 2024 and is adapted from the monitoring criteria table included in *Taking Care of Caribou*.

⁵ Cape Bathurst caribou usually migrate through two settlement areas/regions and are typically harvested by four communities: Aklavik, Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic and Tuktoyaktuk. Community-based information was documented in the following ways:

- The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (WMAC-NWT) held community meetings in Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk; of these communities, Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk are the communities that mostly encounter and harvest Cape Bathurst caribou.
- The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB) conducted harvester interviews with harvesters that were identified as likely to have harvested caribou from the Cape Bathurst Herd.

⁶ All scientific information and comments were provided by Environment and Climate Change (ECC-GNWT) unless otherwise noted.

			2006 2,039 + 319 2005 3,566 + 1,373
Productivity and recruitment	Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - Increased calf sightings. GRRB: - One person stated that they had seen lots of tracks from calves.	Pregnancy rate of captured cows 2024: 9/12 (75%). Last recruitment survey was 2019 so no current information available.	Pregnancy based on serum progesterone, sample size low 2019 recruitment survey included both CB and Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula herds Estimated number of calves per 100 cows in 2019: 41 ± 6.7 (95% CI).
Adult composition	Inuvik (WMAC-NWT): - No noted changes/concerns. Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - No noted changes/concerns. GRRB: - One respondent said they had seen fewer males than females.	There is only one bull to cow ratio for CB (2015), so trend is unknown, but the 2015 results is considered normal. Estimated number of bulls per 100 cows in 2015: 43 ± 4.6 (SE)	Survey was attempted in fall 2024 but not completed due to bad weather
Body condition and health	Inuvik (WMAC-NWT): - Community members said caribou appear healthy. Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - Community members said caribou appear healthy.	Condition of bulls and cows was on average 'good' in the 2024/25 harvest season.	Scientific information based on harvester reported samples harvested in range of the Tuk Peninsula

	GRRB: One person reported that the caribou were healthy and fat with no signs of disease or parasites.	Average Condition code was 2.85 for cows and 2.38 for bulls. Average back fat in 2024/25 was 2.12 cm (range 0-4 cm) for cows and 0.95 cm (range 0-2.5 cm) for bulls. Average % marrow fat for cows was 89% (range 47- 94%) and 83% (Range 32 to 94%) for bulls.	and CB herds. In 2024/2025 season, condition information was reported for 55 cows and 16 bulls, back fat information was collected for 64 cows and 21 bulls, and Marrow fat information collected for 46 cows and 21 bulls.
Harvest levels	Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - Tagged zones are known and reported. Some of the regions with no mandatory reporting may not be shared. GRRB: - Harvest levels were reported to be about the same as usual, though harvesting started a little later than most years.	I/BC/07 and G/BC/02 are closed zone for CB. Total of 56 samples were submitted that were harvested in area the Cape Bathurst herd was over 24/25 winter	TAH tag returns in Inuvik Region unavailable Inuvialuit: 403 quota Gwich'in: 34 quota Sahtú: harvest unknown
Predator populations	Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): Grizzly bear populations are increasing, with sightings of multiple cubs. Eagles are frequently seen. Harvest levels in wolves are up. GRRB:	Tuktoyaktuk submitted 8 wolves and Inuvik submitted 20 wolves in the 24/25 season.	A change in wolf harvest does not necessarily reflect changes in wolf abundance. The payment for wolf

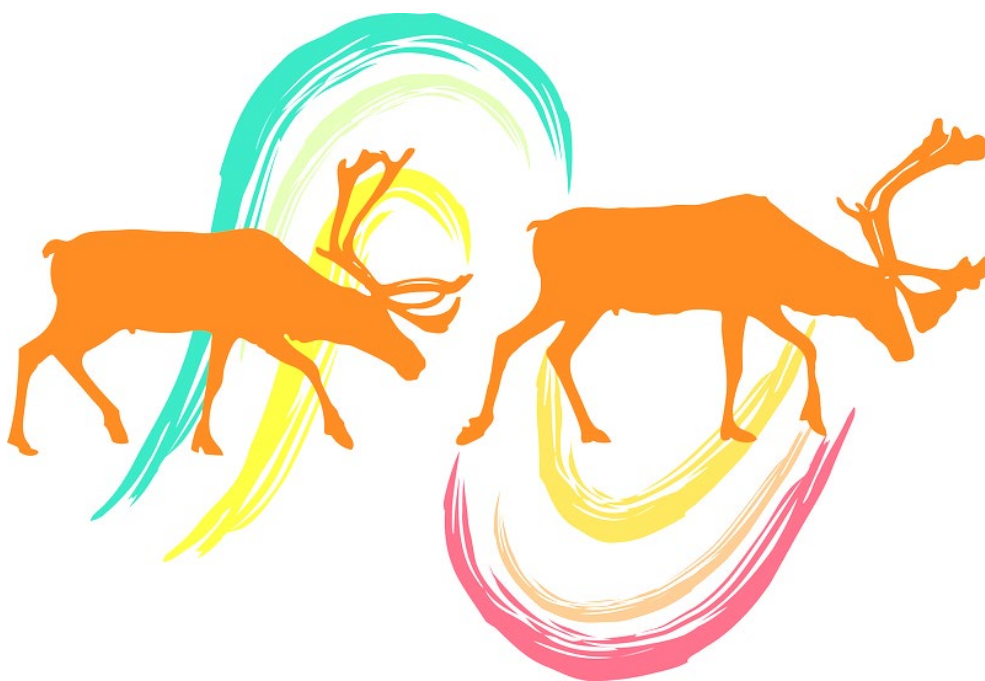
	One person reported that predator populations were increasing.	Some preliminary work on wolf diet some samples collected show that wolf stomach content ranges from 57% in Paulatuk to 76% in wolves harvested by Inuvik hunters	samples increased for wolves harvested in I/BC/06 for the 2022/2023 to 2024/2025 seasons
Range and movement patterns	Inuvik (ISR): - Community members noted concerns on impacts from climate change potentially affecting food sources and migration timing. GRRB: - One harvester reported that the caribou's movements were similar to other years while two people said that caribou aren't going as far south as they used to. (They didn't specify which of the Bluenose herds they were referring to, but based on the locations mentioned, Cape Bathurst has been assumed.) "These days you will find most hunters who harvest from the Bluenose Herd travel into the ISR from Inuvik, particularly in the Eskimo Lakes area. In past years [people] used to harvest Bluenose Caribou when they came into the Travaillant Lake area, east of here. Last few years the herd seems to stop at the Kugaluk River area, not sure why, probably due [to a] few large fires in the Travaillant and Tenlen Lakes area." "They don't seem to be coming as far south and into the timber anymore like they used to, but maybe my timing wasn't the best." (He was hunting north of Sitidgi Lake in March and April 2025.)	In June 2025, 19 CB collared cows were still active from the 2024 deployment, and one switched from Cape Bathurst to Tuk Pen Between 2010 and 2025, 98% of collared CB cows (276 records) returned year after year to calving ground.	

Environment and habitat	Inuvik (WMAC-NWT): - Community members noted concerns on impacts from climate change potentially affecting food sources and migration timing. Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - Late freeze ups and low precipitation were noted. WMAC-NWT: - There are a lot less mosquitoes than in the past. There is more wind and higher water. It has completely changed in the last 7-8 years. GRRB: - Some impact from fires were noted.	There were few fires in the 2025 season on the CB Range	
Human disturbance	Inuvik (WMAC-NWT): - Some concerns with inexperienced hunters and increased access to ITH including new camps. Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): - No major concerns. Some commented on how caribou are not afraid around the ITH. WMAC-NWT: - The completion of the ITH has led to a reduction of flights passing over the area. GRRB: - None reported.	The Cumulative Effects project is ongoing, initial steps to map all current disturbance in the range show that there is a low human footprint on the range (less than 0.4% of the range)	

Competitors	Inuvik (WMAC-NWT): • Moose harvest is increasing. Some community members mentioned muskox are moving closer to communities. Tuktoyaktuk (WMAC-NWT): • Muskoxen are present and may be moving into newer areas. Beavers also have increased on the landscape. GRRB: • Muskox populations were reported to be similar to past years.	Muskox survey in March 2021 shows changes in muskox distribution from past surveys. This includes movement into range of the Cape Bathurst Population in the ISR as a whole appears stable.	
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BLUENOSE-WEST CARIBOU

– *ORANGE STATUS* –



Tuktuvialuk (Inuvialuktun, (Inuvialuktun, Sallirmiutun dialect)
Vadzaih (Teetł'it and Gwichya Gwich'in)
ʔedə (K'áhsho Got'ıne, Dela Got'ıne)
ʔehdaıla Goʔekwé (Délıne Got'ıne)

Understanding Current Bluenose-West Herd Status

The ACCWM met on November 18th 2025, to review information pertaining to the status of the Bluenose-West caribou herd. Prior to that, Member Boards reviewed the information available and held discussions in preparation for the annual status meeting. During status meeting discussions about Bluenose-West caribou, ECC-GNWT biologists provided scientific knowledge. Community knowledge was provided from three regions: the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA), and the Sahtú Settlement Area (SSA).

The 2025 Management Setting

At the start of the 2025 status meeting, the attendees were asked to provide a brief update on some of the management actions and developments that arose in their region over the past year. These are largely summarised in the management action table found in the Bluenose-West Herd 2025 Action Plan.

In addition to the management concerns presented at the meeting, there are several ongoing items that could have implications for Bluenose-West caribou including:

- **Divergent management systems (tags/community management plans):** While each of the Member Boards seeks to ensure the viability of the herd, divergent management systems have the potential to increase tension. This highlights the need for structures that build trust between organizations, communities, and Member Boards.
- **Species at Risk Assessments:** COSEWIC has assessed barren-ground caribou as Threatened. The federal SARA listing has not been undertaken yet. Depending on listings, work on recovery planning and identification of critical habitats may need to happen.
- **Caribou Recovery Strategy:** The NWT Barren-ground Caribou recovery strategy recommends objectives for the conservation and recovery of caribou. It also recommends approaches to achieve those objectives. It includes a description of threats and positive influences on the species and its habitat.⁷
- **A rise in signs of climate change:** There are more landslides, slumping, and warmer temperatures; the impacts on caribou are hard to predict.
- **Community-led conservation planning:** The communities in the Sahtú have adopted a community conservation planning approach to caribou management.

Status Decision 2025

Management actions are based on these phases of the population cycle, using approximate levels or “thresholds” as a guide. Thresholds for the herds were determined by the ACCWM based on known historic highs and lows, with input received from community and technical experts in a consensus-based process. **However, it is not only the threshold value that is used**

⁷ https://www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca/sites/species/files/barren-ground_caribou_recovery_strategy_final_8april2020.pdf

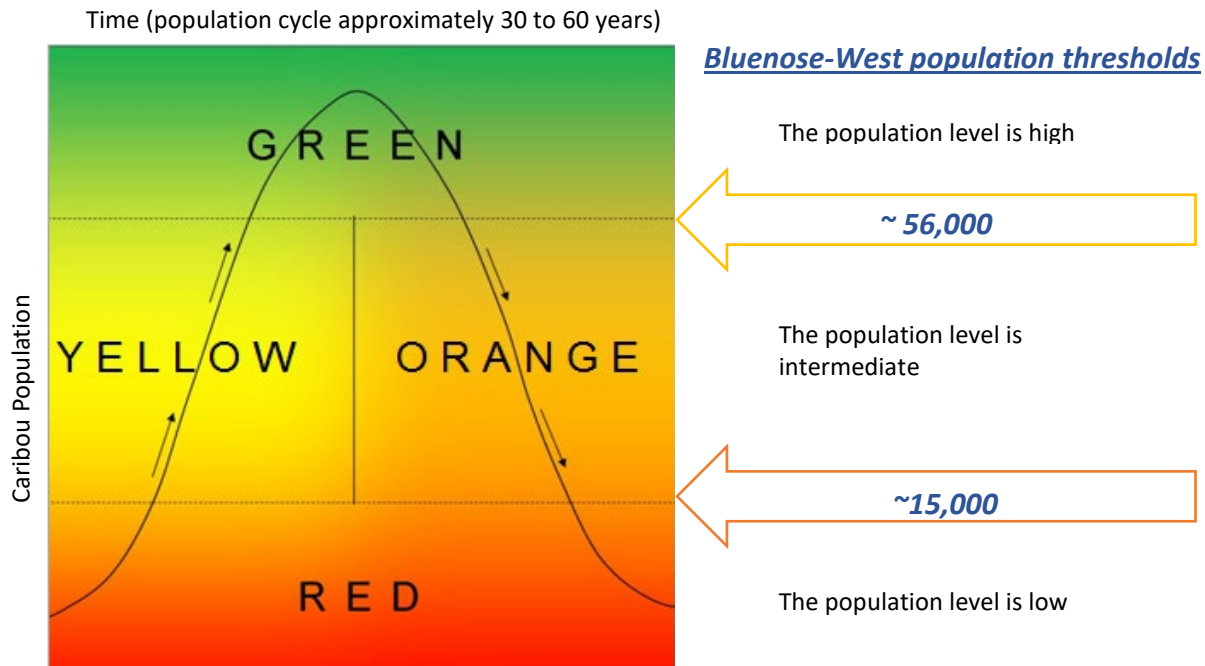


Figure 10: Phases of the population cycle with the colour-coded "traffic light" approach used in the Management Plan and associated Action Plans.

to determine the colour zone – the determination of herd status takes into account all available information. The traffic light approach to understanding risk in caribou population cycles is shown in Figure 10 along with the approximate thresholds for the Bluenose-West (BNW) herd.

According to the process outlined in the Management Plan, numerous criteria are used to make an annual status decision. Information considered by the ACCWM in making the 2025 decision is summarized in Table 12 below.



IN 2026/27

the Bluenose-West caribou population status is

ORANGE: intermediate and decreasing

Based to the information presented at the annual status meeting, the ACCWM decided that the status of the Bluenose-West herd falls within the **orange (intermediate and decreasing)** status. Member Boards noted that the conditions within the Bluenose-West Caribou herd remain unchanged. While indicators point to a stable population, ACCWM members opted to retain the status designation of orange from the previous year and noted that the orange

intermediate and decreasing status may not truly capture the nuance of an intermediate but stable population trend.

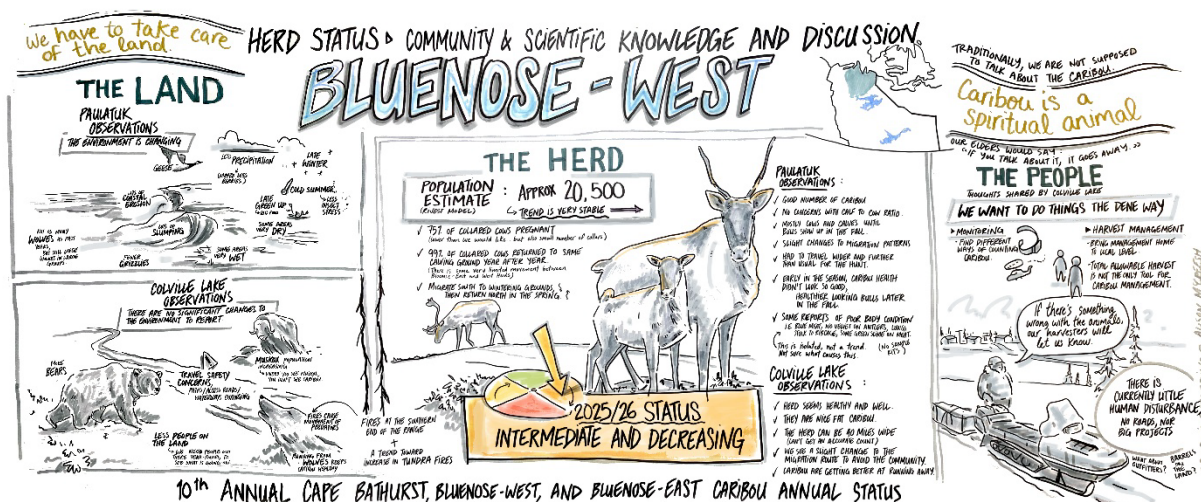


Figure 11: Graphic recording of the Bluenose-West Knowledge presentations. Credit: Alison McReesh

Presentations Given at the 2025 Status Meeting

Both scientific and community knowledge helped to inform the 2025 status decision; further details on some of the relevant survey methods are included in **Appendix D**. ECC provided current scientific information; the data included here were presented at the meeting. The TNNPMB presented some of the future research that is planned within the park.

Some community information was provided on each of the ten monitoring criteria. The following outlines regional approaches to gathering information:

Inuvialuit Settlement Region, NWT – The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (WMAC, NWT) held community meetings in Paulatuk, Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk. These are the Inuvialuit communities that are most likely to encounter and harvest Bluenose-West caribou.

Gwich'in Settlement Area, NWT – Currently, few Gwich'in members are encountering this herd, as such there was no data provided for the Bluenose-West herd this year from Gwich'in knowledge holders.

Sahtú Settlement Area, NWT – Délı̨nę is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔehdaɭla ʔekwé. Colville Lake is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ɶadə. As such, the SRRB annually invites Délı̨nę and Colville Lake to provide direct presentations of community knowledge to the ACCWM. As part of the SRRB's ongoing Public Listening Session series (2020-2024), publicly available community and scientific information about the status of ʔehdaɭla ʔekwé (Caribou Point or Bluenose East caribou, ɶadə (barren-ground caribou in the K'áhsho Got'ı̨nę District or Bluenose-West caribou), people, and planning for 2021 can be found in Délı̨nę and Colville responses to Information Requests, as well as Indigenous

knowledge and science literature reviews. These are posted on the Délı̨nę 2021 PLS Public Registry at www.srrb.nt.ca.

The Délı̨nę Got'ı̨nę Government has approved a revised version of the Belare Wı̨le Gots'ę ęekwę - Caribou for All Time plan that accounts for increased conservation concerns about ęehdaı̨la ęekwę. Colville Lake has developed the Dehlá Got'ı̨nę ęədə Plan and Ts'ı̨duweh ęədə ęeęa (Ancient Caribou Plan).

Representatives of other regions did not provide information specific to Bluenose-West monitoring, as people living in those areas do not regularly encounter or use these caribou.

Sahtú Community Knowledge Presentation

David Codzi (Behdzi Ahda First Nation), Joseph Cochon (Behdzi Ahda First Nation), Catarina Owen (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)

David spoke to Colville Lake's land claims and traditional practices, emphasizing that while the community has historically been consulted, there has been a struggle to effectively exercise rights and address concerns regarding the caribou population. Elders' teachings about avoiding discussions on caribou have been challenged as conversations become increasingly necessary. The community's deep connection to the caribou is vital for survival, yet they feel increasingly disconnected from traditional harvesting practices due to protective measures that limit their access to essential resources.

Trapping and harvesting have been integral to the community's economy for generations, but recent trends have shown a decline in participation, leading to an imbalance in predator-prey dynamics. This year, discussions have focused on the observed decline in local caribou populations and the rise in poaching instances, particularly in southern areas of the Northwest Territories. The community aims to preserve their relationship with the land and is calling for respect in hunting practices. They noted that caribou behavior is changing, as the animals become more elusive in response to increasing hunting pressures and environmental changes resulting from climate impacts, such as fire and melting permafrost.

This year the community harvested approximately 150-160 caribou, though participants noted that hunting has become more challenging, requiring greater effort. This shift could signify an adaptation by the caribou to changing conditions. Notably, there is concern over the reduced number of people venturing into the bush to partake in traditional trapping and harvesting, especially heightened post-COVID-19. Efforts are being made to facilitate more opportunities for community members to engage with traditional practices, emphasizing respect for the environment.

Joseph Kochon present on the community's use of Dene Law to shape a Community Conservation Plan that would govern local harvesting practices, rather than adhering to the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) system. Community leaders stressed the importance of moving away from prescribed total allowable limits and advocated for localized management of caribou

harvesting through their Renewable Resource Council (RRC), promoting a system that reflects the community's connection and responsibility for the land.

The presentation stressed the importance of integrating traditional knowledge with scientific practices in monitoring wildlife health, citing the community's direct engagement with caribou and their migration patterns. Traditional harvesting practices are viewed as essential for food security, cultural heritage, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The community aims to negotiate with GNWT on utilizing their traditional knowledge effectively in wildlife management, advocating for a shared responsibility that empowers local decision-making rather than relying on distant bureaucracies.

Discussion:

During the discussion, there was a request for clarification on the reported caribou harvest numbers, asking whether the 100–200 caribou were harvested solely by Colville Lake or included other communities. David confirmed that the numbers were specific to Colville Lake. He emphasized that every hunter was monitored to ensure ethical hunting practices, with community members accompanying them to prevent waste and ensure that all parts of the animal were used.

Catarina Owen asked if the presenters wanted to share anything more about the caribou populations and David Codzi added that while he hadn't been out hunting this year, in recent years, that they have been seeing lots of calves. The community is seeing a lot of 1- to 2-year-olds being harvested. They aren't hunting cows so there are a lot of young ones every year. He also noted that the caribou are migrating further away from the community than in past years.

Joseph Kochon added that wolves following the migrating herd keep the caribou healthy. He also noted that in places where they used to see moose, they are finding muskox instead.

Inuvialuit Community Knowledge Presentation

Jessica Norris (Wildlife Management Advisory Council -NWT), Ray Ruben (Paulatuk HTC)

Jessica's portion of this presentation focused mainly on the data presented in the monitoring criteria table (see Table 12 below). This data came from the WMAC community tour meetings held in Paulatuk.

The community information session reviewed insights shared by members concerning the current caribou population following seasonal migration. Community observations indicated a healthy number of caribou, with no significant concerns raised about population trends or recruitment levels. Participants reported that the ratios of cows to calves remained stable, and adult composition primarily consisted of cows and young ones, with males appearing later in the fall.

However, body condition assessments revealed some issues; hunters described the meat as "blue," indicating it was lean with little fat. Some noted that bulls had antlers with velvet, and

while no signs of bruising or disease were observed, some hunters reported physical anomalies, such as caribou lungs adhering to their rib cages and unusual green slime around the meat. These factors may have affected the overall quality of the harvest, possibly leading to lower reports of harvest levels and diminished information sharing within the community.

In terms of predator dynamics, there was a noted decrease in the number of grizzly bears, whereas larger packs of wolves were observed. Additionally, mosquito populations were significantly lower this year, likely due to reduced precipitation. Changes in caribou movement patterns were discussed, with community members raising concerns that climate change is altering these patterns, including the timing of migration. Specifically, they pointed out the late green up of vegetation, which did not occur until August, potentially affecting the health of both the caribou and the surrounding ecosystem.

Despite these observations, there were no reported concerns regarding human disturbance or musk ox populations, although some hunters noted a decline in their traditional hunting areas. Additionally, the appearance of geese was mentioned as a potential concern for the community. Overall, the feedback highlighted the interplay between environmental factors and wildlife health, underscoring community members' awareness and adaptation in response to these changes.

During the update from TTNMB, Ray Ruben added to the Inuvialuit community knowledge shared at the meeting. Ray Ruben's comments addressed various observations and challenges related to caribou harvesting within the community. He mentioned that many hunters head south to find caribou. Caribou health reports varied, with some indications of healthy, fat bulls noted through early October, while others reported troubling signs, such as instances of lungs adhering to rib cages, prompting questions about overall animal health.

Harvesters had to travel further than before to access caribou, particularly bulls, as they are avoiding hunting cows. Ray pointed out an increase in sightings of young bulls.

Discussion:

John Blyth asked if there were any comments about the environment changing, such as shrubs getting bigger. James Pokiak answered that some of the members noted that some areas are very dry and others are very wet where they would normally be the opposite. People are seeing a lot of changes in their region, including shoreline erosion and slumping.

But I really believe the past few years the caribou has not been disturbed as much by the warbles and or the flies and the mosquitoes has usually bothered them, so their stress level won't be as high as when there's a really bad influx of insects. They're always running away from the insect but the past few years, with the colder temperatures in the summertime, they're not being stressed in that regards. -James Pokiak

Joseph Kochon added that they are not seeing changes in the landscapes that they hunt on.

Adam Bathe asked Ray Ruben if there were any comments related to changes in the herd's population. Ray responded that though hunters are having to travel further than in the past to find caribou that they are still seeing as many or more than in the past.

Adam Bathe asked Ray Ruben about the reports that some of the caribou they are harvesting are showing signs of disease or poor health. He noted that they have seen some caribou with low amounts of fat or irregularities on their organs, but he didn't know the cause of these or the prevalence.

David Codzi noted that changes in weather patterns, such as heat waves can cause the discolouration in the meat that have been observed by Inuvialuit harvesters.

Presentation on Scientific Information

Tracy Davison (Environment and Climate Change-Government of the NWT)

ECC was able to conduct a post-calving ground survey in 2025 (A survey was attempted in 2024 but the weather and caribou movements did not cooperate). The post-calving population survey results were used to calculate the size of the Bluenose-West herd by using the Rivest method instead of the historically utilized Lincoln-Peterson method. Of the two population-estimation methods, ECC and the boards agreed at the 2016 meeting that the Rivest is preferred as it takes into account group size along with data from collars and photo surveys.

The population survey results (the number of adult caribou) were:

Table 7: BNW Rivest population estimates (2000–2021).

Year	Rivest Estimate
2025	20,476 ± 6727
2021	18,440 ± 5211
2018	21,011 ± 4,602
2015	21,535 ± 5,136
2012	32,326 ± 15,482
2009	21,773 ± 4,884
2006	28,461 ± 7,431
2005	26,228 ± 5,878
2000	118,472 ± 45,177

Total Adult Population Estimate: 20,476 ± 6727.

Estimates place the Bluenose-West herd status well within the orange zone at the low end of the population estimates confidence interval, as the threshold between the orange and red zones for this herd is 15,000 animals.

Population trend and rate of change

The 2025 Rivest population estimate of 20,476 ± 6727 caribou (95% CI) represents that between 2005 and 2025 the herd's population is stable.

Rivest population estimates (with 95% confidence intervals) as well as minimum counts for the period from 1986 to 2021 are shown in Table 7 (above).

Productivity and recruitment

During the collaring process, a blood sample is taken. The level of progesterone in these blood samples is an indicator of pregnancy. Of the 12 samples ECC collected in 2025, 75% indicated that the cow was pregnant. This is a moderate rate. It is not as high as the biologist would like to see but it is a better pregnancy rate than has been observed in the past.

Recruitment surveys show the number of calves that have survived their first winter to be “recruited” into the adult population. This can vary greatly from year to year; in harder winters, fewer calves will survive. Generally, ratios of greater than 30 calves per 100 cows are considered reasonable.

In 2017, a recruitment survey was conducted for the Bluenose-West caribou herd, and a good ratio of 34 ± 2.8 calves per 100 cows was found.

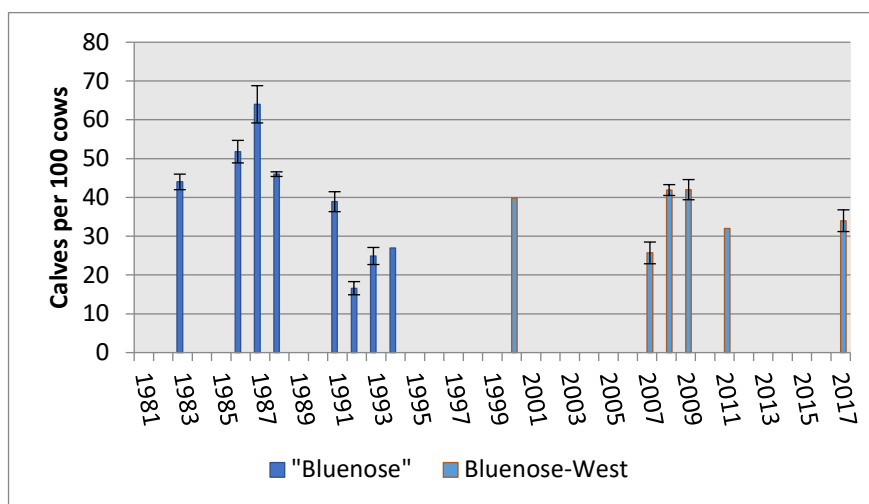


Figure 12: Recruitment estimates for Bluenose-West caribou, 1981–2017.

Recruitment survey data presented during the status meeting is shown in Figure 12. In the years 1983–1994, “Bluenose” includes Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East.

Calf-to-cow ratios can be impacted by the harvesting of females. For example, if a large proportion of cows are harvested and the calves are not, then the number of calves per 100 cows left in the herd will be inflated and will be an inaccurate reflection of actual calf survival. Good harvest data, including the sex of the animals, date of harvest, and location, is needed to better assess the impact of this harvest on the calf-to-cow ratios.

Adult composition

No new data on productivity and recruitment was provided. Data from previous years was presented and summarized below.

The last fall composition survey conducted in 2009 found a bull-to-cow ratio of 70 bulls per 100 cows.

Body condition and health

ECC monitors body condition and health in barren-ground caribou by working with harvesters. Harvesters are asked to measure back fat and to rate the body condition of the caribou they harvest as Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor. These ratings are translated to a numerical value between one and four, with 1 = Poor and 4 = Excellent, so they can be averaged. Scientific information is based on harvester reports and samples for the Bluenose-West herd.

No new scientific information was presented on this topic. Data from previous years is presented below.

Table 8: Results from hunter-harvest body condition sampling for Bluenose-West caribou.

Season	Average Condition Code (number of samples)	
	Female	Male
2019/20*	2.4 (10)	3 (3)
2018/19*	0	0
2017/18*	4.7 (6)	2.1 (8)
2016/17*	n/a	2.7 (6)
2015/16*	2.00 (1)	1.25 (4)
2014/15*	3.29 (17)	3.05 (19)
2013/14	2.6 (11)	3.1 (21)
2012/13	2.4 (14)	2.6 (29)
2011/12	3.0 (1)	(0)
2010/11	2.4 (5)	3.0 (23)
2009/10	2.2 (12)	2.5 (22)
2008/09	1.0 (7)	2.8 (6)



Figure 13: Average condition codes for the Bluenose-West herd, assessed by hunters on a scale of 1–4 with the number of samples noted at the top of the bar.

* Includes only samples from Paulatuk since 2014/2015 because based on collar data, the change of the harvest zone boundary in 2014 means Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters were mainly accessing Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst herd caribou.

Results for average body condition ratings data from previous years were presented and are summarized for the Bluenose-West herd in Table 8 and Figure 13. Please note that samples were submitted from I/BC/06 harvests since the change of zone boundary in 2014 means Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters were mainly accessing Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst caribou. Only Paulatuk samples are included since the 2014/2015 season.

Back fat measurements for the Bluenose-West caribou herd are presented in Table 9 and Figure 14 below. Marrow fat measurements are shown in Table 10 and Figure 15. Marrow Fat observations for 2019/20 were in the healthy range.

Table 9: Results from hunter-collected back fat and health sampling for the Bluenose-West herd combined.

Season	Back Fat in cm (number of samples)	
	Female	Male
2019/20*	2.04 (7)	2.55 (18)
2018/19*	0	0
2017/18*	1.35 (9)	0.52 (6)
2016/17*	n/a	1.79 (6)
2015/16*	2.00 (1)	0.13 (4)
2014/15*	2.21 (17)	2.94 (20)
2013/14	1.77 (11)	2.39 (25)
2012/13	1.66 (17)	1.30 (36)
2011/12	0.75 (2)	1.00 (1)
2010/11	2.01 (9)	3.31 (25)
2009/10	0.70 (12)	1.20 (22)
2008/09	0.00 (5)	2.40 (6)

* Includes only samples from Paulatuk since 2014/2015 because based on collar data, the change of the harvest zone boundary in 2014 means Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters were mainly accessing Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst herd caribou.

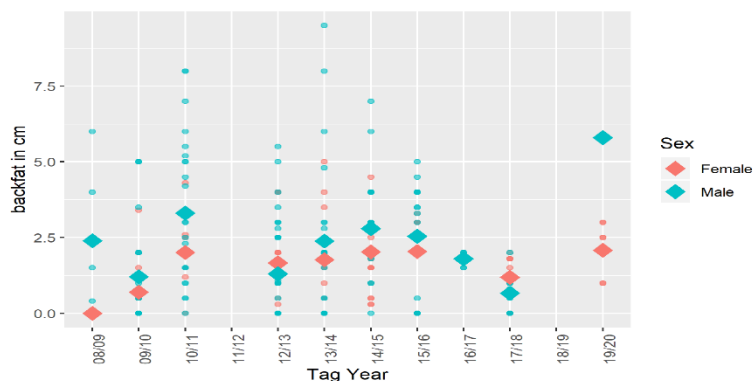


Figure 14: Average reported back fat measurement (in centimetres) for the Bluenose-West herd, with the number of samples noted at the top of the bar.

Table 10: Results from marrow fat health sampling for the Bluenose-West herd combined.

Season	Marrow Fat % (number of samples)	
	Female	Male
2019/20*	88 (6)	91 (15)
2018/19*	0	0
2017/18*	91 (9)	77 (12)
2016/17*	0	91 (7)
2015/16*	88 (6)	91 (15)
2014/15*	90 (26)	90 (23)
2013/14	90 (10)	91 (20)
2012/13	90 (19)	91 (31)
2011/12	93 (3)	93 (1)
2010/11	92 (8)	87 (19)
2009/10	89 (12)	88 (19)
2008/09	90 (7)	90 (8)

* Includes only samples from Paulatuk since 2014/2015 because based on collar data, the change of the harvest zone boundary in 2014 means Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters were mainly accessing Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula and Cape Bathurst herd caribou.

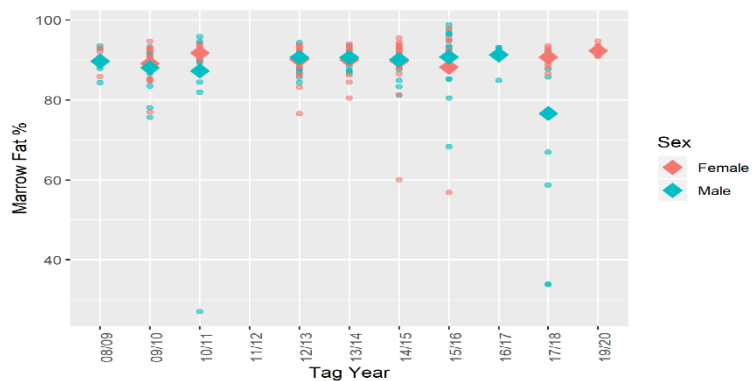


Figure 15: Marrow fat percent and average (diamond). Includes I/BC/08 harvests plus from 14/15 to present harvest by Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk harvesters.

Harvest levels

At the time of the presentation, the harvest data for 2025 as unknown. As such the information from 2024 was presented.

A tag requirement was put in place for the Bluenose-West herd in the Gwich'in Settlement Area and Inuvialuit Settlement Region in 2007, and in the Sahtú Settlement Area in October 2009, following the boards' decision of a 4% Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) limit. Based on the 2006 (Lincoln-Peterson) population estimate of 18,050, the herd TAH was set at 722 animals. The TAH was shared between regions according to approximate historical use and by agreement of the GRRB, SRRB, and WMAC (NWT) with the Minister of GNWT. The TAH was revised for the 2019/2020 season based on the 2018 estimate and set at 840 animals.

Harvest allocations to each region are: 34 Gwich'in (4%), 403 Inuvialuit (48%), and 403 Sahtú (48%). This recommendation also included a bull-dominated harvest with a target of 80% bulls to encourage herd recovery. ECC does not believe that the 80% target is being met.

The number of tags used for each region were: 286 Inuvialuit, and 24 Gwich'in. There was no harvest numbers reported to ECC for the Sahtú region and there are no observations of changing harvest levels from previous years in Sahtú communities.

Predator populations

ECC collects samples from wolves harvested by hunters (Table 11; samples are mostly from the winter season when wolves tend to be hunted. In previous years, stomach contents were sampled, and of all the Inuvik region mainland wolf samples submitted, 68% of the stomach contents were caribou. ECC is now looking at a more long-term analysis using stable isotopes, which will provide information on more than just wolves' most recent meal (e.g., will reveal more information about wolves' year-round diet).

Table 11: Number of wolf carcasses/samples submitted to ECC by hunters, 2010 to Present

Year	Paulatuk	Colville Lake	Fort Good Hope	Unknown
2024/25	0	0	n/a	n/a
2023/24	0	0	n/a	n/a
2022/23	0	0	n/a	n/a
2021/22	0	0	n/a	n/a
2020/21	1	0	n/a	n/a
2019/20	0	0	n/a	n/a
2018/19	0	2	n/a	n/a
2017/18	1	7	n/a	n/a
2016/17	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
2015/16	4	4	3	4
2014/15	26	n/a	n/a	n/a
2013/14	15	30	2	2
2012/13	11	21	6	8
2011/12	12	19	2	0
2010/11	16	22	3	1
Grand Total	92	98	16	15

Other scientific information

- Collars are used to monitor whether the calves and cows return to the same calving grounds year after year. Between 2010 and 2025, 99% have gone back to the same place year after year, showing a very high-fidelity rate. This year 100% of the collared cows returned to the Bluenose-West calving grounds.
- Industrial work is minimal in the Bluenose-West range. For the most part, it is limited to a few helicopter flights, mostly by local communities and researchers in the range.
- ECC is working with a PhD student to study wolves within the Bluenose-West herd's range.

Table 12: Criteria used to assess Bluenose-West herd status in 2025 ⁸

Criteria	Community-Based Information ⁹	Scientific Information ¹⁰	Comments
Population size	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) Once the migration started, community members noted seeing good numbers of caribou.	Estimated number of adult caribou at least 1.5 year old in 2025 Rivest: 20,476 ± 6727 (95%CI)	Estimated based on July post-calving ground survey, 2024 survey unsuccessful
Population trend and rate of change	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) No concerns were raised regarding trend or rate of change.	Between 2015 and 2025 the herd is stable	Trend analysis is based on Rivest estimates 2025 20,476 ± 6727 (95%CI) 2021 18,440 ± 5211 2018 21,011 ± 4,602 2015 21,535 ± 5,136 2012 32,326 ± 15,482 2009 21,773 ± 4,884 2006 28,461 ± 7,431 2005 26,228 ± 5,878
	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) Community members noted seeing cows and calves. No concerns were raised.	Pregnancy rate of captured cows	Pregnancy based on serum progesterone.

⁸ This table is populated with information presented to the ACCWM to assess herd status in 2023 and is adapted from the monitoring criteria table included in *Taking Care of Caribou*.

⁹ Bluenose-West caribou usually migrate through two settlement areas/regions and are typically harvested by four communities: Aklavik, Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic and Tuktoyaktuk. In 2025, community-based information was documented in the following ways:

- The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (WMAC-NWT) held community meetings in Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk.
- Few Gwich'in Participants harvest from this herd, so the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB) had no community-based information to present in 2025.
- Délįnę is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔehdaįla ʔekwę. Colville Lake is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔədə. As such, the SRRB annually invites Délįnę and Colville Lake to provide direct presentations of community knowledge to the ACCWM. As part of the SRRB's ongoing Public Listening Session series (2020-2024), publicly available community and scientific information about status of ʔehdaįla ʔekwę (Caribou Point or Bluenose-East caribou, ʔədə (barren-ground caribou in the K'áhsho Got'įnę District or Bluenose-West caribou), people, and planning for 2021 can be found in Délįnę and Colville responses to Information Requests, as well as Indigenous knowledge and science literature reviews. These are posted on the Délįnę 2021 PLS Public Registry at www.srrb.nt.ca.

¹⁰ All scientific information and comments were provided by Environment and Climate Change (ECC) (GNWT) unless otherwise noted.

Productivity and recruitment	Colville Lake (BAFN): - We can't say exactly if there are more or less calves, but it seems like things are looking normal. "People don't harvest many cows, so we don't see if they were pregnant when they are coming through."	2024: 26/34 (76%). 2025: 9/12 (75%) Last recruitment survey was 2017 so no current information available.	2017 recruitment survey estimated was 34 + 2.8 (SE) calves per 100 cows.
Adult composition	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) - Mostly cows with young ones until later in the fall when males started to show up. Colville Lake (BAFN): "There are no herds with just no cows or no calves in our area. If there was, we would notice."	There is only one bull to cow ratio for BNW (2009), so trend is unknown; the 2009 result is considered high. Estimated number of bulls per 100 cows in 2009: 70	Survey was attempted in 2024 but unsuccessful due to bad weather
Body condition and health	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) - Community members noted that while there were OK numbers of caribou they were physically not in great shape. They described the meat as "blue meat" (little fat, very lean). Some noted that bulls had no velvet on their antlers. There were no indicators on the bodies (i.e. bruising, disease, visible trauma) for this. Similar to last year's comments, hunters noted instances of caribou lungs being stuck to ribcages as well as green "slime" present on the meat. Colville Lake (BAFN): "Nice fat caribou"	No new information available.	

Harvest levels	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) - Harvests are occurring, some harvests are being reported. This year, with the quality of meat being low, it may have impacted harvest reporting levels and sharing of information in general. Colville Lake (BAFN): - This year it is estimated that around 150-160 caribou were harvested by community members.	Total harvest uncertain.	
Predator populations	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) - Community members noted fewer grizzly bears, and more, larger (body size and packs) of wolves. Mosquitoes were noted to be very low this year due to lack of precipitation. Colville Lake (BAFN): "We know the wolves are out there in good number because they are keeping the caribou fit."	Paulatuk submitted 0 wolves in the 23/24 season. In 2024, 4 wolf collars deployed, 9 deployed in 2025 – cluster site and den investigations under way	Changes in wolf harvest does not necessarily reflect changes in wolf abundance. The payment for wolf samples increased for wolves harvested in I/BC/06 for 2023/2024 to 2024/ 2025 seasons
Range and movement patterns	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) - Community members noted changes in movement patterns. Either showing up early (spring) and later (fall). Colville Lake (BAFN): - The herd is migrating further from the community than they did in the past. "In our area the herd is about 40 miles wide."	In June 2025, 43 BW collared cows were still active from the 2024 deployment. One collar that calved with BW in 2024 and BE in 2023 moved back to BE in 2025 Between 2010 and 2025, 99% of collared BW cows	

		(354 records) returned year after year to calving ground.	
Environment and habitat	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) Community members raised concerns regarding climate change and how it may be impacting the caribou. They specifically noted a late green up this year, which may have contributed to the health and condition and movement patterns. Some noted green up did not occur until August. Many noted there was significantly less precipitation, also impacting berries, etc.	There were very few fires in the 2025 season on the BNW range	
Human disturbance	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) No major concerns on human disturbances.	The Cumulative Effects project is ongoing, initial steps to map all current disturbance in the range show that there is a low human footprint on the range (less than .05% of the range)	
Competitors	Paulatuk (WMAC-NWT) - No major concerns regarding muskox, some noted a decline in their normal hunting areas. Some community members mentioned geese as a potential concern. Colville Lake (BAFN): - Muskox is a new species for us. We have seen them move into the area.	Muskox survey in March 2021 shows changes in muskox distribution from past surveys. Population in the ISR appears stable.	

BLUENOSE-EAST CARIBOU

– *YELLOW STATUS* –



Tuktuvialuk (Inuvialuktun, Sallirmiutun dialect)
Tuktut (Inuinnaqtun, Kugluktuk, Western Kitikmeot)
ʔedə (K'áhsho Got'íne, Dela Got'íne)
ʔehdaɭla Goʔekwé (Délíne Got'íne)
Sahti ʔekwò (Tłıchq, Wek'èezhìi)

Understanding Current Bluenose-East Herd Status

The ACCWM met on November 19th, 2025, to review information pertaining to the status of the Bluenose-East caribou herd. Before that, member boards reviewed the information available and held discussions in preparation for the annual status meeting. During status meeting discussions about Bluenose-East caribou, up-to-date scientific knowledge was provided by ECC-GNWT and Government of Nunavut Department of Environment (GN-DOE) biologists, and community knowledge was provided primarily by representatives from three regions: Wek'èezhìi (Tłıchq), the Sahtú Settlement Area, and the Western Kitikmeot region of Nunavut.

The 2025 Management Setting

At the start of the 2025 status meeting, the attendees were asked to provide a brief update on some of the management actions and developments that arose in their region over the past year. These are largely summarised in the management action table found in the Bluenose-East 2025 Action Plan.

In addition to the management concerns presented at the meeting, there are several items that could have implications for Bluenose-East caribou including:

- **Species at Risk Assessments:** COSEWIC has assessed barren-ground caribou as Threatened. The federal SARA listing has not been undertaken yet. Depending on listings, work on recovery planning and identification of critical habitats may need to happen.
- **Caribou Recovery Strategy:** The NWT Barren-ground Caribou recovery strategy recommends objectives for the conservation and recovery of caribou. It also recommends approaches to achieve those objectives. It includes a description of threats and positive influences on the species and its habitat.¹¹
- **Increase in predator population:** Representatives from many regions mentioned that there is increasing concern about the level of predation.
- **Community-led conservation planning:** The KAA Integrated Community Caribou Management Plan includes a local plan for managing the harvest allocation. Additional changes in Nunavut regulations that could influence caribou include increased moose hunts, no beneficiary tag requirement for grizzly bears, no tags or season requirement for wolf harvesting, and an increased muskox TAH to offset caribou harvesting restrictions.¹² In 2017, a community conservation plan was put into effect in Délı̄në to guide peoples' actions toward Bluenose-East caribou,¹³ and a community caribou conservation plan for Colville Lake was in development at the time of the meeting.

¹¹ https://www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca/sites/species/files/barren-ground_caribou_recovery_strategy_final_8april2020.pdf

¹² The Kugluktuk management plan is available from the Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association (Hunters and Trappers Organization), kugluktuk@kitikmeothto.ca.

¹³ The Belare Wile Gots'ë ʔekwë plan is available from the Lands, Resources and Environment Department of the Délı̄në Got'ı̄në Government.

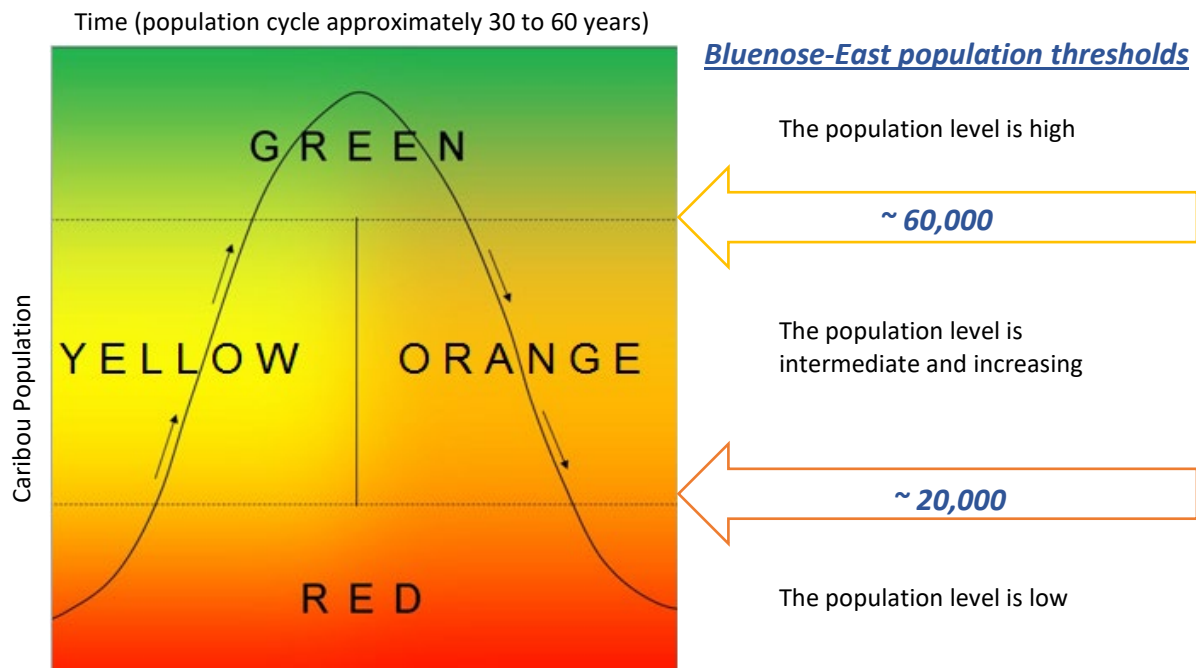
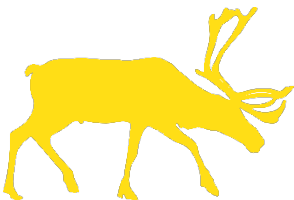


Figure 17: Phases of the population cycle with the colour-coded "traffic light" approach used in the Management Plan and associated Action Plans with Bluenose-East Population thresholds.

Status Decision 2025

Management actions are based on these phases of the population cycle, using approximate levels or "thresholds" as a guide. Thresholds for the herds were determined by the ACCWM based on known historic highs and lows, with input received from community and technical experts in a consensus-based process. **However, it is not only the threshold value that is used to determine the colour zone – the determination of herd status takes into account all available information.** The traffic light approach to understanding risk in caribou population cycles is shown in Figure 16 along with the approximate thresholds for the Bluenose-East herd. According to the process outlined in the Management Plan, numerous criteria are used to make an annual status decision. Information considered by the ACCWM in making the 2025 decision is summarized in Table 14 below. During the annual status meeting, stakeholders are encouraged to provide important local and Indigenous knowledge that helps to inform the status decision.



In 2026/27

the Bluenose-East caribou population status is

Yellow: intermediate and increasing

Based on the information provided and the subsequent discussions, the ACCWM determined the Bluenose-East herd status colour zone continues to be **Yellow (intermediate and increasing)** in November 2025.

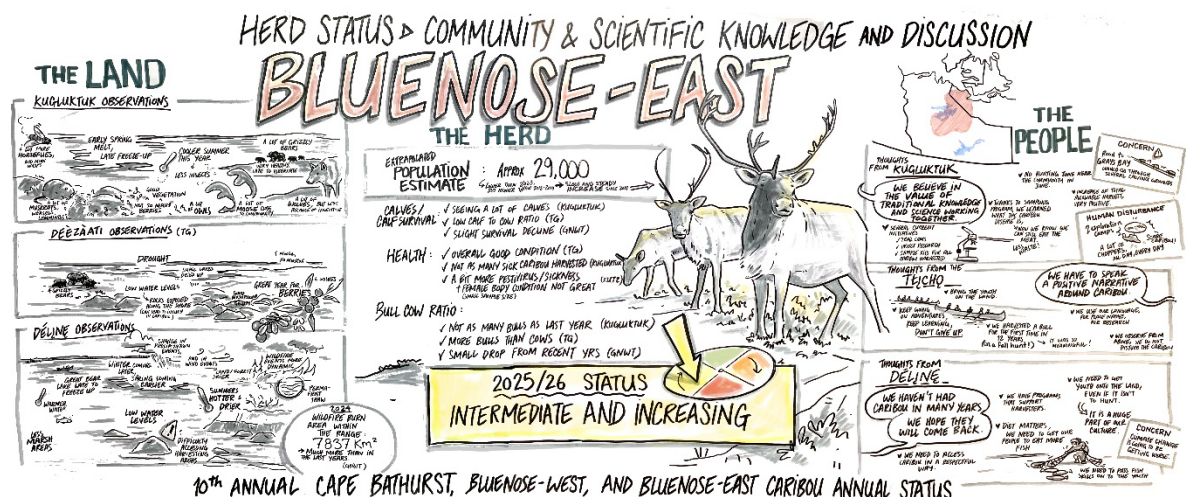


Figure 16: Graphic recording of the Bluenose-East Knowledge presentations. Credit: Joline Mars Jackel

Presentations Given at the 2025 Annual Status Meeting

Both scientific and community knowledge helped to inform the 2025 status decision; further details on some of the relevant survey methods are included in **Appendix D**. ECC provided current scientific information at the status meeting; the data included here were presented at the meeting.

Community information was provided on each of the ten monitoring criteria. The following groups presented their community data to the gathering:

Western Kitikmeot Region, NU – Kugluktuk information was documented and shared by Amanda Dumond and Larry Adjun of the KAA during the meeting. This data was collected through workshops and interviews with hunters, KAA board members, and GN wildlife officers. The community of Kugluktuk has a no-hunting zone from June 1st to July 1st, when the caribou are close to town, the caribou harvest mainly takes place in the fall.

Sahtú Settlement Area, NWT – Délıne is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔehdaıla ʔekwé. Colville Lake is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔədə. As such, the SRRB annually invites Délıne and Colville Lake to provide direct presentations of community knowledge to the ACCWM.

Wek'èezhìi (Tłıchq), NWT –TG staff presented data collected in the Tłıchq region. The data presented was largely collected through the 2025 Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è program at Deèzàati (Point Lake).

Sahtú Community Knowledge Presentation

Walter Bezha (Délıne Renewable Resources Council), Sam Bullock (Délıne Renewable Resources Council)

For a several years, Bluenose-East Caribou have not approached the community of Délıne. As such Walter discussed the challenges in caribou harvesting for the people of Délıne and the emphasis on alternative food sources due to the lack of caribou availability. He highlighted the support programs established to facilitate local harvesting, including a gasoline subsidy program that has been in place for about five years, making it easier for community members to engage in traditional harvesting activities. He also noted the importance of the Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) program, which received a new 10-year funding commitment and promotes on-the-land activities.

The community has increasingly relied on fish as a food source, with a focus on whitefish and lake trout harvesting. Recently, however, the harvesting of fish has faced disruptions due to environmental conditions, such as the delays in ice formation on Great Bear Lake, restricting travel and access to fishing areas. Despite these challenges, the community continues to promote fishing and aims to increase knowledge and skills related to fish preparation among younger generations.

He expressed the need to explore options for acquiring caribou from other areas through sharing of other harvested foods, such as fish, while ensuring compliance with the land claims.

Walter commented on the health of the community, noting rising diabetes rates tied to dietary habits influenced by limited access to traditional foods. He emphasised the critical role of programs aimed at food security and harvesting support, highlighting the increased demand for resources like fuel for hunting.

Walter mentioned collaborative efforts with the Délıne Got'ıne Government as an integral part of addressing the challenges faced by the community and caribou. The importance of maintaining respectful hunting practices and ensuring access to caribou for future generations was emphasized. The speaker called for a collective effort to adapt and sustain traditional harvesting practices while integrating new opportunities in response to the changing environment.

Sam Bullock presented on the ongoing challenges faced by the Délıne regarding fish harvesting and the broader implications of climate change on wildlife and food security. He explained that the DGG was promoting fish harvesting, with the fish being distributed to people in need particularly to elders and single parents.

Sam shared the historical importance of fish as a consistent food source for the community, especially given the declining caribou populations. He noted the need to explore how climate change is impacting both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, including migratory birds that are losing habitat due to changing environmental conditions. Observations from the Great Bear Lake and surrounding areas indicated significant changes in rainfall patterns and temperature fluctuations, which have implications for harvest timings.

Additionally, Sam highlighted the cumulative effects of changes, including the need for communities to evacuate due to environment. Sam noted the importance of considering the impacts of ongoing environmental changes on the community's ability to harvest food and maintain their way of life.

Tł̨chq̨ Community Knowledge Presentation

Jocelyn Zoe, Été Lafferty-Zoe, & Janelle Nitsiza (Tł̨chq̨ Government)

Jocelyn introduced the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è Tł̨chq̨ Caribou Guardians program, which was established in 2015. The program monitors caribou populations and movements, starting at Contwoyto Lake and now has been expanded to 3 base camps which monitor Bathurst, Bluenose-East, and Beverly caribou herds.

In 2025, they completed a canoe trip from Grenville Lake to Deèzàatì, sharing knowledge of traditional trails and landmarks. Ete, one of the canoe trip participants, described the experience as challenging due to low water levels, tundra fires, and difficult portages.

Janelle presented on the Sahtì ekwò (BNE) monitoring efforts from August to October, where two teams observed 668 caribou in 67 groups over 36 days. They travelled over 1,300 km during this monitoring season. Data collection included calf-to-cow ratios (18 calves per 100 cows), body condition assessments, and group composition. Most caribou were in good health, with 52% of bulls and 54% of cows classified as fat.

Predator observations have varied over the years. In 2025, predator presence was low. Moose populations were noted as increasing in the past but only one was spotted in 2025. No muskoxen were observed.

The presenters described environmental conditions, noting drought, thick willow growth, and extensive wildfire damage. Some areas remained moist despite low water levels, potentially aiding land recovery. This year was a peak year for berries. The forage was overall very good and abundant. Elders observed that the barrens were shrinking due to vegetation encroachment.

Human disturbances included helicopter surveys and abandoned fuel drums near Deèzàatì.

Kugluktuk Community Knowledge Presentation
Amanda Dumond (Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association)

Amanda Dumond highlighted the various methods used for information gathering, which included direct communication with harvesters and regular monitoring of population data.

Community members report an increase in the Bluenose-East caribou herd, with many calves observed, contrasting with reports from other areas experiencing fewer calves.

The health and body condition of harvested caribou have improved, with fewer sick animals reported this year. Amanda commented that educational initiatives regarding parasites, like leg worms and abdomen worms were important for reducing waste during harvests.

The community is following the total allowable harvest of 45 animals, with a preference for bulls, though cultural reasons for occasional cow harvests remain. Previously, the small number of available tags limited harvests, creating hardship for community members and affecting traditional sharing practices, but recent increases in allowable harvests have made things better for the community.

Amanada also spoke to the predator populations, noting a decrease in wolves, likely due to an incentive program encouraging their harvesting. The community harvested a significant number of wolves, bears, and wolverines. Observations of grizzly bear populations showed healthy sows with cubs, while environmental changes such as earlier spring melts and later freeze-ups are impacting wildlife behaviour. In the past they have had dry hot summers, but this year was not as bad, with a little more rain and greener vegetation.

The ongoing challenges posed by human disturbances, particularly from exploration activities near the community that disrupts caribou movement and hunting practices continue to be a concern. The proposed road and port near important caribou harvesting areas could threaten the caribou population.

Discussion

Jospeh Kochon asked how big of an area was represented by the presentation. Amanda explained that their harvesters travel the way from Victoria Island down to Great Bear Lake and over to Bathurst Inlet.

Alissa Sallans asked about an insect sampling program. Amanda explained that the program has been going on for a long time and is currently being expanded throughout the region. She mentioned that it has educated people on insects and how they affect the wildlife.

Jocelyn Zoe asked if the Grizzly bear population is impacting the caribou population. Amanda responded that they are seeing lots of bears. Kugluktuk has always had lots of bears but there are a lot of new cubs that do very well. They are on the calving grounds. The KAA is partnering with the GN to monitor the bears.

Population size and rate of change

ECC’s most recent calving ground survey was conducted in June 2025. ECC switched from post-calving ground surveys (still used for Bluenose-West and Cape Bathurst herds) to calving ground surveys for the Bluenose-East herd in 2010.

Table 13: BNE population estimates (2010–2023).

Year	Estimate
2025	28,759 ±2,762
2023	39,525 ±6,504
2021	23,202 ±4,362
2018	19,294 ± 4,729
2015	38,592 ± 4,733
2013	68,295 ± 18,041
2010	102,704 ± 39,965

The 2023 population estimate is 28,759 ±2,762caribou (95% CI). Between 2015 and 2018 the herd experienced a statistically significant decrease of 20% and has been estimated to be stable from 2018 to 2021. The results of the 2023 survey show a remarkable increase in the population that may show the population responding to the positive environmental and habitat conditions that have been reported in past years. The estimate of adult females in 2025 was lower than in 2023 but still much higher than in the previous couple of surveys. Alicia commented that the 2023 survey may have been biased high and that the trend from 2018 to 2025 reflect a slow and steady increase in the Bluenose-East herd. She also noted that populations can fluctuate in both directions but still trend in an upward direction.

Survey results from earlier years are available in *Taking Care of Caribou* and in the ECC technical report.

Productivity and recruitment

In October 2025 composition surveys were conducted with a calf-to-cow ratio of 48:100. In the October 2024 survey the calf-to-cow ratio was 48.8:100.

Based on the number of collars still active, ECC estimates cow survival rates. Cow survival rates in 2024 were estimated to be around 78.0%, this is down slightly from 2021 (collared cow survival rate of 81.0%).

23 of the 24 females tested in March 2025 were found to be pregnant.

Surveys in March 2024 are flown to see how many calves are recruited. The survey observed 47.2 calves:100 cows. These observations are very close to what is being observed in the fall surveys indicating a very low calf mortality rate over the winter. No survey was conducted in 2025.

Adult composition

The fall 2025, bull-to-cow ratio was much lower at 38 bulls:100 cows when compared to previous years. The survey was timed to match the peak of the rut, and a lot of prime bulls

were sighted. The previous trend of high bull to cow the ratios may have indicated a positive trend that is in line with what was observed during the big herds of the 1980s (ratios of 60-70 bulls:100 cows).

Harvest levels

According to ECC, harvest levels have been very low in the North Slave Region for several years. For example, 15 bulls were taken in the winter of 2016–2017 and 10 bulls in 2017–2018. Recently, the number of bulls harvested has remained stable (74 in 2018-2019, 76 in 2019-2020 and 63 in 2020-2021, and 76 in 2021-2022) but is still well below the current limit of 193 bulls for Wek'èezhìi. As the herd generally stayed away from areas that are easily accessed by hunters, people tended to focus their hunt on the Beverly herd, which can be accessed via the winter roads to the mines.

Predator populations

As a response to the dramatic decline in caribou numbers and concerns for survival rates for both cows and calves, ECC has enacted some programs to help reduce pressure on the caribou. These include harvest restrictions, and habitat management (such as aggressive wildfire mitigation) and now they are working on reducing predation pressure. Community members and co-management partners have made strong calls to do something.

The first step was to review predator control programs in adjacent regions and then a technical feasibility study was completed in 2017. In 2019, the WRRB recommended increasing wolf management actions to the GNWT and TG. They submitted a joint proposal for 2020-2025 to enhance support for wolf harvesters and the traditional economy.

The best available information shows that wolf population numbers rebound quickly. So, a 60-80% reduction for 5 years is needed to have any significant effect on the wolf population.

Other scientific information

- Development within the range is very limited at 0.0152% of the range being directly impacted.
- New highway projects are currently being proposed that are just outside of the BNE's traditional range. The Mackenzie Valley Highway EA is about 50% complete, while the Slave Province Road and the Grays Bay Road are in the early stages of their respective EAs.

Table 14: Criteria used to assess Bluenose-East herd status in 2025¹⁴

Criteria	Community-Based Information ¹⁵	Scientific Information ¹⁶	Comments
Population size	KAA: Spring 2025 good numbers to see, lots across river; herd after herd passing through past Twin Lakes.	Estimated number of adult caribou at least 1.5 year old in 2025: 28, 759 (95% CI 25,997-31,816)	Estimate based on June 2025 calving ground survey and Oct 2024 and 2025 fall composition surveys.
Population trend and rate of change	Tłıchq: - The two teams at Deèzàatì saw a total of 668 caribou in 67 groups. - Group size ranged from 1 to 100; average group size was 10 and median group size was 5. KAA:	The 2025 estimate is lower than the 2023 estimate but still higher than the 2018 and 2021 estimates.	Preliminary population models suggest a “slower and steady” increase since 2018.

¹⁴ This table is populated with information presented to the ACCWM to assess herd status in 2024 and is adapted from the monitoring criteria table included in *Taking Care of Caribou*.

¹⁵ Bluenose-East caribou usually migrate through four settlement areas/regions in the Northwest Territories and into the western portion of the Kitikmeot Region, Nunavut. The herd may be harvested by ten communities: Wrigley, Norman Wells, Tulı́t’a, Déłı́nq, Whatı, Gamèti, Behchokq, Wekweèti, Paulatuk, and Kugluktuk.

Déłı́nq is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔehdaı́la ʔekwé. Colville Lake is the Sahtú community that primarily harvests ʔədə. As such, the SRRB annually invites Déłı́nq and Colville Lake to provide direct presentations of community knowledge to the ACCWM. As part of the SRRB’s ongoing Public Listening Session series, publicly available community and scientific information about status of ʔehdaı́la ʔekwé (Caribou Point or Bluenose-East caribou, ʔədə (barren-ground caribou in the K’áhsho Got’ı́nq District or Bluenose-West caribou), people, and planning for 2021 can be found in Déłı́nq and Colville responses to Information Requests, as well as Indigenous knowledge and science literature reviews. These are posted on the Déłı́nq 2021 PLS Public Registry at www.srrb.nt.ca.

¹⁶ All scientific information and comments were provided by Environment and Climate Change (ECC) (GNWT) unless otherwise noted.

	• Last year – lot more calves. • This year still seeing a lot of calves. • Increasing. Déljné (DRRC): • We're not going to have caribou here any time soon. The population is going up but they are not coming back in the near future.		
Productivity and recruitment	KAA: • Spring 2025 – almost every cow had a calf. • Still, lots of yearlings observed. • Fall 2025 – little harder to say as herd was scattered. Tłjchq: • At Deèzàati there was a total of 67 ekwò groups; 39 of those groups had at least one cow and were used to estimate an overall late summer calf:cow ratio. • The 19 groups included a total of 151 cows and 28 calves and resulted in an estimate of 18 calves per 100 cows (i.e., 0.184 ± 0.035 SE); this ratio would be low even if most calves survived the coming winter.	Pregnancy rate of captured cows 2025: 23/24 (96%). 2025 fall calf cow ratio: 49 calves: 100 cows (SE 0.02; 95% CI 45-52).	Pregnancy based on serum progesterone. No March 2025 recruitment survey due to overlap with other herds.

	• In general, a caribou herd's trend would be stable if late winter calf recruitment was 35 calves per 100 cows in combination with an average adult female survival rate of 85%. • During last week of August, the calf: cow ratio was 0.54, showing a reasonable presence of calves. • In September, we saw fewer calves and the calf:cow ratio was low. Groups of females with only 1 calf with them were observed.		
Adult composition	KAA: • Last year – lots of bulls. • This year – didn't see as many. • By fall 2025 people were seeing more. Tłıchq: • Most caribou groups observed were small and scattered throughout the landscape. • The herds observed were a mix of bulls, cows, and calves. • Many caribou were ts'ida` and yèagoa – young cows and bulls. • More bulls than cows were	2025 fall bull cow ratio: 38 bulls:100 cows (SE 0.03; 95% CI 33-43)	The 2025 ratio is lower than the 5 ratios observed from 2020-2024 (58-66 bulls: 100 cows) and similar to the 6 ratios observed from 2009-2019 (35-43 bulls: 100 cows).

	observed in the herds.		
Body condition and health	KAA: • Not as many sick caribou harvested this year compared to last year. • With people now aware of the leg worm and abdomen worm, people not leaving whole caribou behind as when butchering, caribou seemed very sick from the worms. Déline (DRRC): • Some hunters harvested a few caribou near Colville Lake. All the caribou harvested looked healthy. Tłtchq: • The Sahtì ekwò were in good shape, and the adult bulls and cows were described as having good condition or fat. In mid-September, they have new healthy fall coats and most of the velvet has peeled off the antlers, normal for this time of the year. • The teams at Deèzàati observed body condition of 69 bulls, 85 cows, and 39 calves, respectively. One thin caribou bull was seen. Of the 69 bulls in 26 groups, 52% were fat		

	and 42% were good and one bull (1%) was thin. Of 85 cows observed, 54% were fat and 42% were in good condition. Most calves (82%) were in good condition and 18% were considered fat (see tables in comments). • Of the 668 caribou observed, monitors watched 493 caribou (74%) within 42 groups to see if any animals showed signs of injury while walking. On the 27th of August, the team observed one caribou calf travelling alone; it was limping and may have got lost from the herd. On the 20 September, monitors observed a group of 6 caribou (2 bulls, 3 cows, and a calf) and saw that a bull was limping and appeared to have an injured left hind leg. Monitors observed a thin caribou on the 23 September, which had an injured right leg.		
Harvest levels	KAA: • 2024-25 TAH 450: 174 harvested, 138 males/36 females. • 2025-26 TAH 450: Current harvest		

	is unknown. Déłıne (DRRC): • A couple caribou were harvested near Colville Lake. • No caribou came near the community, so the harvest in the last year was essentially zero. Tłıchǫ: • There was a total harvest of 14 Sahtı ekwǫ caribou during the harvesting season of 2024/25. • The Mobile Core Bathurst Conservation Zone was so large that it encompassed most of the BNE caribou during winter, making it challenging for BNE caribou to be harvested. • Last year, August 2024, one bull was harvested during the canoe trip from Tatsotı (Grenville Lake) to Deèzàatı (Point Lake): the first bull to be harvested in fall since 2012.		
Predator populations	KAA: • Didn't see as many wolves compared to last year due to the wolf incentive program. • Close to community observations		

	of many wolves and grizzly bears. - Grizzly bear sows still being seen with multiple cubs. Tłıchq: - This year there were six wolf observations. A new wolf den was found near camp and numerous caribou bones in various stages of decomposition were observed in the vicinity of the den. - Four grizzly bears observed on the island, including one mama bear with two cubs.		
Range and movement patterns	KAA: - Choppers around may have changed some movement. - More westerly migration. Tłıchq: - During mid-August, numerous groups of Sahtı ekwò migrated southward to Deèzàatı, the herds stayed north of Deèzàatı for weeks. Some herds went further south to Grenville Lake. This is their traditional way of migrating. - Most caribou groups were seen were small and scattered	During winter 2024-25 Bluenose-East herd overlapped with the Bathurst and Beverly herds. Of 38 cows on the Bluenose-East calving ground in 2024 that were still monitored in June 2025, 34 returned to the Bluenose-East calving ground. 1 went to Beverly, 1 returned to Bathurst, and 2 approached from west but did not get to the core calving area.	

	throughout the landscape.	25 additional cows with new collars deployed in March 2025 went to Bluenose-East.	
Environment and habitat	KAA: • Lots of muskrats, mice, lemmings, and weasels. • Cooler summer; insects were moderate. • Vegetation in good condition this year. • The past couple of years there are more horseflies. They are no longer just found along the river. Déline (DRRC): • Climate change is affecting our wildlife. • The marshlands are gone. • Wind events seem to be drying out the land. • Spring is coming earlier; fall is coming later. • Summers are earlier hotter and drier. • Wildfire dynamics are changing. There are no longer marshlands to slow them down in the boreal forest. • Permafrost melt is increasing the	Average amount burnt per year: 2020: 82 km² 2021: 308 km² 2022: 2,012 km² 2023: 2,877 km² 2024: 7,837 km²	

	amount of mercury being released into the water. Tłıchq: • Caribou forage and the vegetation were good and in healthy quality. • A variety of berries were abundant. Blueberries were very large this season. Large numbers of mushrooms of various sizes were observed. • Low water levels for the 4th year in a row. • Small lakes are all dried up. • On the fall range around Deèzàatì in September, the vegetation and ekwò food were described as overall good and healthy quality. Caribou forage quality ranged from average to good. • Blueberries, crowberries, cranberries were abundant, while cloudberry were not found, though their leaves were present. Blueberries were very large this season large numbers of mushrooms of various sizes were observed. • Water levels had dropped		
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	significantly, for the fourth year in row, as indicated by exposed shorelines and sand dunes. The water level decreased by an estimated 3 meters, with exposed shoreline ranging 10–20 meters in some places.		
Human disturbance	KAA: - Multiple choppers, one low flying survey plane, two different exploration companies south of community. - Lots of disturbance every day, morning until night all summer long. Tłıchq: - No new human disturbance observed in 2025. - By the outflow of the river from Itchen Lake, there is an old exploration camp with garbage and debris from camps scattered along the esker, on east side of the river. - Old fuel drums found at several locations around Deèzàati; most likely left behind by mineral exploration companies.	Limited, no active mines. Development footprint 2025 0.022% of range. Mackenzie Valley Road extension proposed east of BNE range; Slave Province Road & Grays Bay Road proposed west of BNE range.	Cumulative effects assessment project underway (multi-herd).

Competitors	KAA: • Quite a few moose close to community; lots in treeline. • Muskox – not as many seen close by as they are further inland. Tłıchǫ: • In 2025, one moose, no muskox observed		
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Appendix A: List of ACCWM Working Group Members

The ACCWM formed a working group to draft the Action Plans that accompany the *Taking Care of Caribou* Management Plan. The Working Group included representatives of the following organizations:

- ʔehdzo Got'Inę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
- Dehcho First Nations¹⁷
- Department of the Environment, Government of Nunavut
- Environment and Climate Change (ECC), GNWT
- Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
- Inuvialuit Game Council
- Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board
- Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization (Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association)
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
- Parks Canada Agency
- Sahtú Renewable Resources Board
- Tłıchq Government
- Tukturnogait National Park Management Board
- Wek'èezhıı Renewable Resources Board
- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)

¹⁷ The Dehcho First Nations organization is part of the Working Group but has had very limited involvement. There is an outstanding invitation for them to join the ACCWM.

Appendix B: Terms of Reference for the ACCWM Annual Status Meeting

Background

Taking Care of Caribou: The Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou Herds Management Plan outlines a long-term framework for management actions that are based on a herd's status. The ACCWM is responsible for determining herd status each year and recommending appropriate management actions based on that status. This is done at an annual status meeting, normally held in late November. Management and action planning are based on a harvest year of July 1 to June 30.

Purpose of the Annual Status Meeting

The purpose of the annual status meeting is to:

- Assess the population status of the herd,
- Determine the management (colour) zone that applies to the herd based on the assessment, and
- Recommend management actions for the following year.

Financial Considerations

The individual boards of the ACCWM are responsible for expenses related to their members' participation and the administrative costs of convening meetings, as outlined in their Memorandum of Understanding (2016). Individual boards of the ACCWM will cover the expenses of their members' travel to and participation in the annual status meeting. They will take turns hosting the meeting and will cover the costs for the meeting room and other associated costs of hosting the meeting. Host boards may seek supplementary funding to cover these costs as needed. All other participants of the annual status meeting are responsible for costs they may incur in their participation.

Host Requirements

The meeting chair/host party shall provide secretariat services to the Committee for the hosted meeting. For further clarity, secretariat services include, but are not limited to, organizing a meeting, preparing a meeting agenda, coordinating preparation of background information, taking notes, and preparing meeting minutes and correspondence.

Meeting Preparation

Preceding the annual status meeting, the following steps will take place:

1. A meeting date will be set by the ACCWM and communicated to all partners.
2. Researchers, community members, and other interested parties may be invited to present information and/or participate as appropriate, eight weeks prior to the status meeting.
3. Eight weeks prior to the meeting, Member Boards will collect, compile, and coordinate monitoring information to be shared with other boards. Other agencies and organizations that may also have information will be approached at this time (e.g., PCA, GN, etc.). Member Boards use this information to populate the monitoring table.
4. Four weeks prior to the meeting, parties need to confirm attendance at the meeting. Regionally populated versions of the monitoring table are then distributed to confirmed attendees. This will include all information available from community monitoring, traditional knowledge work, and scientific monitoring, and will include harvest information.
5. There is an expectation that each Member Board will come to the annual status meeting prepared to discuss herd status and propose management actions through consensus.

Meeting Format

The annual status meeting will be organized into two working sessions, with the following steps taking place during those sessions:

1. Public information and comment meeting
 - Review available information from each region
 - Receive presentations, summary reports, etc.
 - Review and discuss actions that were implemented in the preceding year
 - Review and evaluate implementation of actions under communications strategy
 - Introduce and discuss actions that are proposed for the upcoming year
2. In-camera meeting of the ACCWM and support staff
 - Finalize monitoring table, based on all regional input
 - Collectively review and discuss all available community-based information (including traditional knowledge) and scientific information
 - Member Boards deliberate to determine herd status, considering all information that was presented during the public information and comment meeting
 - Evaluate implementation of priority actions in Action Plan from previous year
 - Review recommended management actions based on status and prioritize actions for coming year

- At the conclusion of each meeting, the participating members shall determine the chair/host and date of the next meeting

Meeting Deliverables:

1. Written summary of the meeting, including proposed status decisions for three herds, the populated monitoring table, and a rationale for the status decision for review and consideration by each Member Board
2. Recommendations for prioritized, status-appropriate management actions and revised Action Plans
3. Revised communications actions as needed
4. Determination of the confidentiality of the information

Following the annual status meeting, the chairs of the Member Boards present these deliverables to their respective boards for review and consideration. Each Member Board then follows the process laid out in their land-claim agreements to determine whether they support, oppose, or accept the recommended status and associated actions with comments or revisions.

Within 30 days, the ACCWM representatives will each meet with their individual Member Boards (via teleconference or in person) to formalize their board's position regarding the status decision and recommended actions. Each Member Board then communicates their position to the Minister; other ACCWM Member Boards are copied on this correspondence. The ACCWM then submits updated Action Plans for implementation. In Nunavut, the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board will communicate their position regarding status and actions to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board for a decision (NWMB). The NWMB then will forward their decision and recommendations to the Department of Environment Minister for approval prior to implementation.

Amendments to Annual Status Meeting Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference will be reviewed from time to time as the ACCWM Member Boards may determine. Any Member Board may propose amendments at any time, but amendments proposed within three months of the annual status meeting shall not be reviewed by the ACCWM until after the meeting. The board proposing the amendment(s) has a responsibility to forward them to all Member Boards. Boards shall have 90 days to provide comments. Once approved by all the Member Boards, the amended Terms of Reference shall supersede any previous versions.

Appendix C: Communication Plan

This communication plan is a living document. Its current version reflects the knowledge and understanding of the ACCWM during the first round of action planning in 2015 and early 2016. It is expected that it will evolve as the ACCWM and its Member Boards continue to implement *Taking Care of Caribou* and the associated Action Plans. This communication plan addresses the specific context of managing these caribou herds in the NWT and Nunavut, which includes a diversity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and languages, and various types of wildlife management institutions. This plan focuses on formal communications while recognizing that a great deal of communication takes place in informal ways in the north (for example, one-on-one conversations, phone calls, etc.).

Goals and Objectives

Clear principles and methods for communication will help to ensure that:

- All groups can effectively participate in sharing knowledge of the caribou and of the Management Plan;
- Groups will work together to discuss and implement effective management actions; and
- Trust and confidence in management processes will be built.

Taking Care of Caribou describes communications about caribou stewardship as being accessible and active, as well as two-way between knowledge holders and wildlife managers.

Our goals are for communications about Action Plan implementation to be regionally appropriate. Communications should also be timely so that no one is left guessing as to what decisions have been made, what events are planned, what herd status and monitoring results are, and what activities and actions are underway. Successful communications should help support decision-making and help build awareness and understanding of who the ACCWM is, as well as its mandate and those of its Member Boards. When sharing information with the public, our goal is to be consistent and make materials clearly identifiable and related to *Taking Care of Caribou*.

Communication objectives may change as management actions are implemented, depending on the type of ideas and information being shared. Many objectives are interconnected and some communications will touch on multiple objectives. Our overall objectives are: announcing and sharing information; building awareness; increasing community and partner participation; and

education. Below are some examples of the types of information that may be shared for each of these objectives as *Taking Care of Caribou* is being implemented:

Announcing and Sharing Information

- *Taking Care of Caribou* Management Plan, Community Engagement Report, Technical Scientific Report
- Herd-specific Action Plans
- Decisions made by wildlife managers
- Meetings or public events
- New programs and information on how to participate
- Changes to policy or regulations
- Newly completed reports or reviews
- Perspectives and knowledge
- Partner, community, or organizational discussions, concerns, or activities with regard to the caribou

Building Awareness

- ACCWM, mandate and members
- Newly implemented programs
- Successful events held
- Recognition of partnerships and teamwork

Increasing Community and Partner Participation

- Motivating harvesters to participate in sampling programs
- Encouraging the public to follow management decisions
- Recruiting people to help plan events
- Recruiting people to participate in meetings or events related to management actions
- Requesting partner feedback or participation on working groups
- Requesting funding support for management actions

Education

- ACCWM, mandate and members
- Management and Action Planning processes

- The colour-coded herd status
- Any voluntary or regulated limits on harvesting, such as changes to regulations
- Rationale for harvest regulations (e.g., why harvesting mostly bulls rather than cows may be preferable)
- What is being researched or monitored and why
- Results of research or monitoring programs
- Impacts of current or proposed land-use activities to caribou and ways to mitigate impacts
- Educational themes, such as promotion of respectful hunting and butchering practices, information about caribou diseases and human health risks, and other themes described in *Taking Care of Caribou*. (Note: other education-specific activities are included in the Education section of the management actions table in this document).

Responsibilities

An Education and Communication Working Group will help prepare official communications about *Taking Care of Caribou* and the implementation of management actions that come from the ACCWM as a committee to the public, or that come from ACCWM Member Boards on behalf of the ACCWM to their regional communities. Such official communication is a different type of communication than when community organizations or individuals contact their HTC, RRC, or ACCWM Member Board, for example.

The ACCWM and the Education and Communication Working Group need to ensure that overall messaging about the ACCWM and its Member Boards as well as situational messaging are pre-approved. The ACCWM and its Working Group also need to consider their communication objectives, both long-standing and situational, when considering messaging. In addition, the Education and Communication Working Group should also track input given to the ACCWM and ACCWM responses to those inputs. For example, this may include feedback regarding a potential product from a target audience.

The individual boards of the ACCWM will each be responsible for delivering the prepared communications within their regions as scheduled. They will be required to assist the Education and Communication Working Group by giving timely feedback and direction regarding what methods, messages, and audiences will be appropriate for meeting communication objectives in their regions.

While communication will span both formal and less formal methods, overall, it will rely on teamwork and cooperation to successfully deliver common messaging about *Taking Care of Caribou* and associated actions.

Target Audiences

For every type of communication method used in implementing management actions, care will need to be taken to determine the specific audience and to target communications appropriately. Several examples of possible target audiences for communication include:

- Youth and schools
- Harvesters
- Proponents and developers
- Regulators
- Air carriers
- Visitors
- Potential funders

A further task of the Working Group will be to consider how to incorporate languages into communication messaging to ensure that it is regionally appropriate. It is expected that the ACCWM and the Education and Communication Working Group will be responsible for developing messaging that can be adapted by Member Boards to regional situations with local languages incorporated according to individual board protocols. The Working Group and ACCWM can be a forum for sharing best practices in using local languages.

Timing and Frequency

For *Taking Care of Caribou* to be successful, it is important that communications are timely and appropriately paced. There need to be regular annual communications of the work of the ACCWM. There will also need to be communications that are responsive to decisions between annual status meetings, including responses to urgent situations. The Education and Communication Working Group can help respond through assignments from the ACCWM to prepare materials in these different situations. The Education and Communication Working Group can also make recommendations to the ACCWM regarding timing and frequency.

Again, the individual boards of the ACCWM have a high level of responsibility in ensuring that communications and reviews of draft products prepared by the Working Group are done in a timely fashion and are appropriate for their region.

Methods

There are many communication techniques which may be used depending on the particular message and the intended audience. The Education and Communication Working Group, with feedback from regional partners, will need to consider what each target audience encounters, reads, listens to, watches, and engages in, to help place messages where they will be seen and accessed, and

to ensure that communications are in a suitable format for the chosen audience. Visual messaging that helps the public easily recognize *Taking Care of Caribou* communications should be used in products prepared by the Education and Communication Working Group. For example, communications may include a recognizable logo with “*Taking Care of Caribou*” as the tagline.

Examples of possible communication methods that were suggested by community members during public engagements for *Taking Care of Caribou* include:

- Posters
- Fliers and brochures
- Radio announcements and programs
- School visits
- Presentations, such as at HTC or RRC meetings
- Newsletters
- Promotional materials (e.g., items such as caps, T-shirts, mugs, bumper stickers, magnets, cloth grocery bags, etc.)
- Internet and social media, such as organization websites, Facebook pages, YouTube feeds, podcasts
- Letters to the Editor
- News stories, columns, and reports
- Press releases and press conferences
- Written or in-person briefings to airlines or developers
- Community events, such as on-the-land gatherings, sight-in-your-rifle events, etc.
- Word of mouth
- Music
- Exhibits and public art
- Books or other reading material, such as education modules
- Television (e.g., cable stations can show PowerPoint ads for a low cost; purchased ad time can also be used to convey messages)
- DVDs, such as hunter training videos
- Theatre plays or skits
- Storytelling

The annual status meeting of the ACCWM and its Working Group is another opportunity for face-to-face communication between representatives of management agencies, community members, the public, and scientists.

Resources

Successful communications will depend on the availability of resources, including staff, funds and other resources, such as technical equipment needed for various media types. Adequate funding will need to be sought out and budgeted for to ensure that full opportunity is provided for dialogue about the status of herds and management actions being considered or underway. Care should be taken to look for opportunities for partnerships and donated resources that might be available for communications needs (e.g., in editing, translating, printing, publishing, and disseminating information).

Evaluation

Each year, the ACCWM will meet to review implementation of the Action Plan(s). Part of this review will include an evaluation of communications made to and from the ACCWM, Plan partners, and the public. It is important to evaluate how well communications were carried out and how well they worked in meeting communication goals and objectives. A template for evaluation can be built from the list of objectives and should also include consideration of the Education and Communication Working Group process and its interactions with and responsiveness to direction from the ACCWM. The communications plan itself will also be reviewed for possible revisions at that time. Good communication would mean that groups effectively participated to share knowledge, and that they worked together to discuss and implement actions and built trust and confidence in management processes. As with the Management Plan, an adaptive management approach will be taken to ensure communications are effective as *Taking Care of Caribou* is implemented.

Appendix D: Background to Some Survey Information Used in the Action Plans

Scientific Knowledge: Background to post-calving survey methods

The post-calving ground survey method is used to obtain a population estimate for the Cape Bathurst herd. The first survey of this kind was done in 1986. Radio collars are deployed on caribou in March throughout the caribou range. These collars are then used to find groups of caribou in July during post-calving. On hot days with little wind when the bugs are harassing the caribou, the caribou will form large groups on the tundra. These groups are photographed from a small airplane, and the number of 1+ year old caribou can be counted on the photographs.

There are two different methods to calculate a population estimate and the associated confidence interval using the information collected from the post-calving survey: Lincoln-Peterson and Rivest. Both methods use the number of collars and the number of caribou counted on the photographs in their estimate calculations. The Lincoln-Peterson method adjusts the number of caribou counted on the photographs by a ratio of collars deployed to collars located during the survey. If all collars are found, the population estimate remains the minimum count as it assumes all animals can be located near a collared caribou. The Rivest method takes into account the probability of finding a group based on group size and number of collars; this method will always result in an estimate higher than the minimum count.

Switching population estimates: from the Lincoln-Petersen to the Rivest method

Estimates from both population estimation methods have been included here for comparison purposes; however, ECC and the boards agreed at the 2016 meeting that the Rivest is the preferred estimation method. In the past, the Lincoln-Peterson method had consistently been used to estimate the population size of the Bluenose-West herd. In the future, the Lincoln-Peterson estimate will also be provided. There are several reasons for switching to the Rivest method, including:

- Other jurisdictions are using Rivest estimates to estimate population size
- The Rivest method always provides confidence intervals
- The Lincoln-Peterson method tends to have a bias toward low estimates
- Larger confidence intervals resulting from the Rivest method may be more realistic measures of uncertainty; the Lincoln-Peterson method may not represent actual uncertainty

It is important to note that under ideal survey conditions, where there is adequate grouping of animals and most or all collars are found, the two methods produce very similar estimates.

Traditional and Community Knowledge: 2018 community engagement or survey methods

Traditional knowledge and community knowledge (TKCK) make important contributions to the annual status assessment and decision. In order to compare this type of information from year to year and across different regions, it is important to have as much consistency as possible in how it is documented and compiled.

In 2017 the ACCWM Working Group developed a slide show and list of questions that could be used as a template for conducting community engagement at public meetings and documenting discussions about caribou. Some of the regions adopted this format for their engagement; others used different tools, such as surveys and targeted exercises, at smaller meetings or in expert focus groups. Details on how engagement was achieved in each region can be obtained from the individual Member Boards.

We hope to find ways to support methods and approaches that can be adapted to best suit each region, but to also ensure that we are using rigorous methods that produce reliable, accurate and comparable information and are appropriate for including/bridging Indigenous knowledge and science. In 2020 we plan to review current best practices in this field of research.

Appendix E: Determining Allocations and Total Allowable Harvests

In areas of Nunavut and the NWT that have land-claims agreements, when strict conservation measures are needed, a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) is established. The TAH is based on what is considered to be an acceptable percentage of the herd to harvest, considering where it is in its population cycle, whether cows or bulls are harvested, and associated risks to the herd. This means that as a herd's status changes, the TAH will change.

Harvest allocations are an agreed-upon set percentage of how the total harvest from a herd is shared between groups. Agreements about allocations are based on harvest levels and according to the requirements of regional legislation and of land-claims agreements. Priorities for harvest allocations are laid out in *Taking Care of Caribou* (p. 48).

The ACCWM recognizes that it is important to work collaboratively when discussing a TAH for shared herds. With the exception of the TNNPMB, each ACCWM member may, if circumstances require, set a TAH for their region; allocation is then done within the

region according to what is outlined in individual land claims. Within this setting, communities may also choose to voluntarily restrict harvest – for example, a regional council such as an HTO may set community by-laws that affect harvesting.