

Barry Taylor/Arctic Safaris

SUBMISSION TO

Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board

“Joint Proposal on Caribou Management Actions in
Wek'eezhii”

August 5&6, 2010

Thank you for this final opportunity to speak on the joint submissions of the GNWT and Tlicho Governments.

In my March presentation I gave you my background and personal views on this affair resulting from over 40 years on the barren grounds, along with the benefits attributed to the Outfitting Industry. Those views still stand.

I have scrutinized all the 1200 or so pages of documents submitted by ENR, most of which just confused me with all the unsubstantiated theories as to numbers and how they were arrived at.

One document has caught my attention, and that is "Caribou Project Summary and Review part 2 – Population Dynamics by Doug Heard & Mark Williams, February 1991. This is attached and the most interesting parts are in red.

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. Mark's data suggests that pup survival is related to caribou densities (but more data are needed) but it has yet to be demonstrated that caribou abundance at treeline is density-dependent.

I must also direct you to my presentation of March 2007, a reply to the questions posed at that time by the WRRB following the GNWT's cut in the quotas. It is attached.

In that presentation, I gave the reasoning in harvesting older males:

"The outstanding trophy specimen is an old male, in the late prime of his life; he has already sired descendants to carry on his heritage. Under any circumstances, he has only a few seasons left. Since his species is polygamous, shooting him will not affect the numbers that survive.

What is more, we have learned a lot about heredity. We now know that descendants of a young male inherit the same general characteristics as the offspring sired by the same animal in his later life. This means that if we shoot a younger animal instead of a grand old trophy specimen --- in the belief that we are thereby preserving the finest breeding stock --- we may be unwittingly destroying a son of the older one, or of an even better sire, when the young animal could give more years of service to his race.

The final argument in favor of trophy hunting concerns the sportsman himself. When a hunter passes up the small heads and waits for a real trophy, he will see more game, learn a lot more about hunting, and have the satisfaction of meeting a much more formidable challenge to his skill."

This is the foundation of ethical hunting and the continuance of the Caribou herds.

From the same presentation,

Trophy hunting, both as a commercial industry as well as a wildlife management tool, holds superior advantages for northern communities, many of whom often feel themselves in direct competition for wildlife within their immediate areas. The meat products going into the communities result in lesser need for community hunting.

The NWT is without doubt a pro-wildlife utilization area. It embraces the concept of sustainable utilization of our natural resources. We do, however, realize what our function within the NWT trophy-hunting industry is. The responsibility of being custodian of our significant wildlife resource is our paramount obligation to all stakeholders, and will continue to be.

We are now more proud than ever of our hunting heritage and will endeavor to protect this Northern jewel for the benefit and enjoyment of all generations to come.

Due to the delays in these hearings resolving issues 4 and 5, there are no outfitted caribou hunts happening this fall. This means that up to 40,000 pounds of meat normally destined to the communities and Food Bank will not exist. Without this meat, both the Food Bank and elders they service will be forced to do without. This is one of the sad consequences of the GNWT and Tlicho Governments' poorly thought out agenda, the fallout effect on those who most need it!!

Other ramblings and questions from myself,

1. "Who, in the GNWT, is properly trained in Game Management?" We have lots of biologists, and they appear to be relied upon to function in the role of Game Managers, but I know of no one in that designated position.
2. "With the increased quotas for Bison, what effect will they have on that herd?" When quotas were first brought into place, we were told that the goal was to achieve 5-6000 animals. Have those goals changed?
3. "There is much talk in the new proposals of training the later generations of Tlicho in the ethical hunting fashions of the elders. What programs are being implemented and when will these goals start to see effect?"
4. "With 40,000 pounds of meat to be replaced (from the outfitters), where is that vital source to come from?"
5. "I've repeatedly asked, "What is the targeted number of Bathurst caribou to be achieved with these proposals?" No one appears to be in a position

to answer this question. We know that the numbers attained in the 80's were virtually an all-time high for a 100 year period, but what are the "sustainable" numbers that we are attempting to reach?

6. Wolves have been targeted to a small degree for increased harvesting. In Yellowstone Park transplanted wolves are accounting for 29 elk per year per wolf. ENR submitted documents point to 2000 wolves in the caribou grounds. These are animals quite versatile in harvesting caribou and undoubtedly have played a part in decimating numbers.
7. Apparently bears and their effects on caribou numbers were not considered due to their low incidence of birth-rate. When are bear numbers forthcoming? We have been awaiting the promised bear count for over 10 years. I have correspondence with Alaskan professionals and guests who state that the NWT has areas with higher bear densities than found in Alaska, and from personal observations, a bear will take a caribou every two days if available. In one season at camp we estimated that bears accounted for 3 times our harvest, in the same time frame!

Thank you for listening, and I encourage the Board to closely scrutinize all future effects of their decisions on the Northwest Territories and its people. This, your first major challenge, will set the pattern for the future conservation and management.

'Nuff said,

CARIBOU PROJECT SUMMARY AND REVIEW PART 2 – POPULATION DYNAMICS

by Doug Heard & Mark Williams
February 1991

Biologist meeting March 1991

Heard and Williams: Summary of Caribou Project Review

We concluded that the key to whether caribou are limited by food or predation is whether is whether or not caribou can escape wolves, i.e., does migration prevent wolves from showing a numerical response (pup survival) to changing caribou densities. If wolves do not show a numerical response then predation cannot regulate caribou numbers but the presence of a wolf numerical response is insufficient to conclude that predation is regulatory. Mark's data suggests that pup survival is related to caribou densities (but more data are needed) but it has yet to be demonstrated that caribou abundance at treeline is density-dependent. Migration still functions as an anti-predator strategy (e.g. – cows going to calving grounds) but it may not be completely successful. Sexes differ in their predator risk-food reward strategies with bulls risking more in early summer for good food as demonstrated by fecal nitrogen samples. Predators (and bugs) can have non-lethal effects on energetic by altering distribution and foraging efficiency (e.g. – group size).

Summer is clearly an important time ecologically influencing growth, pregnancy and survival. Radiocesium shows that in some areas (e.g. – the Richardson mountains) caribou are not eating lichens. Cesium concentration is a poor estimator of caribou consumption rates by wolves.

The 3 key research (null) hypotheses are:

1. There is no correlation between wolf predation rates and caribou density at treeline dens during summer, i.e., when caribou density declines because of migratory movements wolves can still find enough caribou so that kill rate remains at same rate as in winter.
2. Summer wolf pup survival is independent of predation rate on caribou.
3. Caribou migration in summer does not improve access to food of higher quality or quantity.

Heard : What Constitutes Caribou Management?

Management is some action that alters caribou ecology (e.g. – distribution or abundance). Actions can be directed toward people (e.g. – hunting quota changes) or other environmental influences (e.g. – fire suppression). Surveys and board meetings do not constitute management, nor is simply forecasting a decline unless we expect people to change their hunting behavior in response to that prediction. Given that all populations fluctuate, I think a reasonable management objective is to reduce the amplitude of fluctuations as much as possible and secondarily to influence the mean herd size.

Caribou management actions in the NWT are rare compared to most other jurisdictions. Southhampton Island is an exception. I propose to eliminate hunting restrictions there, in hope people will shoot the entire annual recruitment and keep the herd well below hypothetical K. If the herd declines, reducing the number shot should allow rapid recovery as range should remain in good shape. If the herd continues to increase the rate it approaches K will be much reduced, minimizing subsequent overshoot and declines. Active introduction of wolves is an unpopular suggestion, but may happen naturally.

The Bathurst herd has many strong and conflicting interests and complex ecology. Conflicting demands allows for creative solutions e.g. – complex quotas if ecology is understood.

**Presentation for the
Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board
March 13, 14, 15, 2007
By Barry Taylor, Arctic Safaris**



The Northwest Territories is one of the most attractive hunting destinations globally, period! The country is blessed with products so appealing that the attraction is simply undeniable. We are serious about hunting in the Northwest Territories and it is our privilege to share this with our foreign friends with confidence, leaving them with a memorable, life-changing experience.

The Northwest Territories' trophy-hunting industry is finding itself at a crucial juncture, due to the vast growth of recent years. The time has come for territorial trophy hunting to find a common, sustainable long-term vision shared by all stakeholders. We need to brand our territorial trophy-hunting product and then market it as such. The objective is to capture the uniqueness, honesty, superior quality and authenticity of the NWT hunting experience and for all stakeholders to commit to this vision by protecting what we have at all costs.

The over-commercialization of hunting could potentially lead to greed and over-exploitation of the resource. It is crucial that we prevent unwelcome practices such as over hunting and short-term management techniques where operators offer marginal quality hunts instead of luring the same client back for follow-up hunts to find high-quality trophies. NWT trophy hunting is not about making money in the short term. It is about a superior product offered in a sustainable manner at a quality-related price to a deserving client.

Trophy hunting, both as a commercial industry as well as a wildlife management tool, holds superior advantages for northern communities, many of whom often feel themselves in direct competition for wildlife within their immediate areas. The meat products going into the communities result in lesser need for community hunting.

The NWT is without doubt a pro-wildlife utilization area. It embraces the concept of sustainable utilization of our natural resources. We do, however, realize what our function within the NWT trophy-hunting industry is. The responsibility of being custodian of our significant wildlife resource is our paramount obligation to all stakeholders, and will continue to be.

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Personal reply to WRRB Questions to the Outfitters

a) Do outfitters have business plans flexibility, given herd size changes?

We have some flexibility, given sufficient lead time to make changes. *The Outfitters Association has repeatedly requested 2 to 3 years advance notice of changes affecting their operations.* This has always been due to clients booked years in advance and the time frame to reprint promotional material and get it distributed to the hunting public. At present Arctic Safaris has clients booked into 2009, has advertising contracts valued at \$30,000 for 2007 and 2008, and is awaiting *newly revised* promotional literature based on the tentative 750 animal quota for 2007 that was recently imposed. That change in literature cost \$14,000. New equipment was also purchased in the fall that may not be required now.

Flexibility and its incorporation require time and must blend into current operations. Many of us were somewhat flexible last season when the future quotas were to be scrutinized.

b) Have outfitters seen a decline in trophy antler size?

It first must be determined what constitutes a trophy antler.

From "How to measure and score Big-game Trophies" by Grancel Fitz of the Boone & Crockett Club:

"The outstanding trophy specimen is an old male, in the late prime of his life; he has already sired descendants to carry on his heritage. Under any circumstances, he has only a few seasons left. Since his species is polygamous, shooting him will not affect the numbers that survive.

What is more, we have learned a lot about heredity. We now know that descendants of a young male inherit the same general characteristics as the offspring sired by the same animal in his later life. This means that if we shoot a younger animal instead of a grand old trophy specimen --- in the belief that we are thereby preserving the finest breeding stock --- we may be unwittingly destroying a son of the older one, or of an even better sire, when the young animal could give more years of service to his race.

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The preceding explanation was the basic thinking behind the Official Scoring System of Boone & Crockett and that of Safari Club International.

I have been a Master Measurer for Safari Club, Rowland Ward, and Longhunter organization for over 20 years. In addition I am qualified to teach the Boone & Crockett system, although not officially measure, due to my occupation.

Over the past 25 years I therefore have kept records of all caribou taken from my camp plus some from other camps and have been a close observer of the quality of trophy antlers taken in the Barren-lands.

Complete diaries of our time in the barren-lands have been kept for over 25 years. Included are daily temperatures, humidity, barometer readings and complete observations of vegetation, rainfall, water levels, and animals seen, and in particular, caribou movements and interactions with predators.

Until about 8 years ago, trophy quality remained consistent. At that time, it was noticed that new genetics were appearing in the size and shape of antlers. Instead of perfectly defined antlers, we began seeing what, in other species would be called “non-typical”. That is, there were unusual growths and poor symmetry, not common to the caribou herds encountered in the previous years. In discussions with both my long-term guides and the same from other outfitters, we came to the conclusion that new herds were moving in from the west, with different genetics. We reported this to the biologists. They were neither concerned nor interested.

Over the 8 years since, the new genetics, *indicating different herds* have overtaken the old, making the success rate on “trophy antlers” more difficult due to the aberrations in antlers.

Good trophy specimens are still being taken to this day, but it is harder to find “perfect, well formed” antlers with the herds we are now seeing.

Nourishment is the other factor in antler growth, and in the same time frame, changing environmental conditions have played a factor in that nourishment. Hence, an obvious decline in total antler growth in some years.

2006 saw an earlier spring than in the previous 4 years, with excellent vegetation, and as a result, the animals’ physical condition was excellent. That, combined with few insects, provided the potential for absolute antler growth. The net result was a tremendous year for trophy antlers.

The obvious conclusion is that the animals’ environment, combined with the proper genetics, leads to trophy antlers, and the last eight years have not been good environmentally for many of the caribou herds. ***However, the trophy antler potential remains excellent, and will remain so.***

c) What is the likely impact of tag reductions of non-resident hunters from 2 to 1?

An immediate reduction could be disastrous for the NWT's reputation as commitments are already made to clients for both 2007 and 2008. There would be cancellations. These are tourists who have booked holidays, made travel arrangements, and put their faith in the quality reputation of the Northwest Territories' outfitters to stand by their word.

Awareness of any impending reduction will take time in order to reduce the impact on all phases of the Northwest Territories' tourism. A sour experience on a hunt could carry over and result in the cancellation of another trip fishing or whatever.

It will result in a lessened demand for hunting in the North as we cannot offer alternative combination hunts for other species of big game such as bear, moose, or muskox.

d) What are the economic benefits of the Outfitting industry?

The Outfitters Association has well outlined the economic benefits derived from our industry by the citizens of the Northwest Territories.