



Minister of Environment and Natural Resources



Tlicho Government

Box 412, Behchoko, NT X0E 0Y0 • Tel (867) 392-6381 • Fax (867) 392-6389 • www.tlicho.ca

NOV 27 2015

Mr. Jonas Lafferty
Interim Chair
Wek'eezhì Renewable Resources Board
4504 49th AVE
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 1A7

Dear Mr. Lafferty:

WRRB Meeting September 23-24, 2015 and Management Recommendations for Bathurst and Bluenose-East Caribou Herds

Thank you for your response to our letters of August 25, 2015 and September 22, 2015 on management of Bathurst and Bluenose-East (BNE) caribou. We appreciate the recognition by the Wek'eezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) of the need to take management actions to benefit these herds in both the short-term and medium-long-term.

Responses to your board's recommendations are attached. We have listed these in order, including the reiterated recommendations from 2010. Some are specific to Tlicho Government (TG), some to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), some to both governments, and this is indicated in the responses. TG and ENR will engage in their respective consultations and community meetings on these recommendations in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Michael Miltenberger".

J. Michael Miltenberger

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Grand Chief Edward Erasmus".

Grand Chief Edward Erasmus

Attachment

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- c. Chief Clifford Daniels of Behchokò, TG
- Chief David Wedawin of Gamèti, TG
- Chief Johnny Arrowmaker of Wekweèti, TG
- Chief Alfonz Nitsiza of Whatì, TG
- Ms. Laura Duncan, Tłı̨chǫ Executive Officer, TG
- Mr. Sjoerd van der Wielen, Lands Protection Manager, TG
- Ms. Jody Pelissey, Executive Director, WRRB
- The Honourable Robert R. McLeod, Premier
- Mr. Gary Bohnet, Principal Secretary, Office of the Premier
- Mr. Martin Goldney, Deputy Minister
Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations
- Ms. Lynda Yonge, Director of Wildlife, ENR

ATTACHMENT

Recommendation #1-2015

Given the situation appears to be an emergency, the Board recommends that Tłı̨chǫ Government (TG) and Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) come to agreement and implement a further reduction in numbers of caribou harvested for subsistence users of the Bathurst caribou herd during the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Following a number of discussions, the leadership of TG and ENR met on October 13, 2015 and agreed that a harvest target of 0 for Northwest Territories (NWT) Aboriginal harvest of the Bathurst herd is recommended for 2015-2016. ENR will continue to work with authorities in Nunavut towards implementing a consistent approach to management of Bathurst caribou in Nunavut and the NWT. Similarly, both TG and ENR urge your Board to use the abilities and resources at its disposal to inform your counterparts in Nunavut of the importance of Nunavut examining its harvesting levels in light of what is being done in the NWT.

Recommendation #2-2015

The Board recommends that TG and ENR come to an agreement on whether the Mobile Core Bathurst Caribou Conservation Area (MCBCCA) or Wildlife Management Units Subzones is the most effective way to differentiate between barren-ground caribou herds, and then implement, for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Following a number of discussions, leadership of TG and ENR met in October, 2015 and agreed that a renewed version of the MCBCCA first implemented in winter 2014-2015 with the approval of the WRRB should be continued in winter 2015-2016. There was agreement that subzones may be a preferable approach in future and will be explored further, but defining these in the current harvesting year would need to include discussion with other communities (e.g. Lutsel K'e region in the East and Sahtú region in the West) and it is not feasible to implement subzones for the winter harvest season 2015-2016.

Recommendation #4-2015

The Board recommends that all commercial harvesting of Bathurst caribou within Wek'èezhìi remain at zero for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

TG and ENR agree with continuation of this measure for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

Recommendation #5-2015

The Board recommends that all outfitted harvesting of Bathurst caribou within Wek'èezhii remain at zero for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

TG and ENR agree with continuation of this measure for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

Recommendation #6-2015

The Board recommends that all resident harvesting of Bathurst caribou within Wek'èezhii remain at zero for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

TG and ENR agree with continuation of this measure for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

Recommendation #7-2015

Given the situation appears to be an emergency, the Board recommends that TG and ENR come to agreement and implement a further reduction in numbers of caribou harvested by subsistence users of the Bluenose-East (BNE) caribou herd during the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Following a number of discussions, leadership of TG and ENR met in October 2015 and agreed that a harvest target of 950 for Aboriginal harvest of the BNE herd (total for the herd, including Nunavut) with 100% bulls is recommended by both governments for 2015-2016. ENR will continue to work with authorities in Nunavut towards implementing a consistent approach to harvest of BNE caribou in Nunavut and NWT. TG would like to see more resource board cooperation on developing a consistent approach to harvesting, both throughout NWT and Nunavut.

Recommendation #8-2015

The Board recommends that any harvest allocation should be finalized in discussions with traditional NWT and Nunavut harvesters of the BNE caribou herd as well as wildlife management authorities from the BNE caribou herd range, including the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB), Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT) and Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board (WRRB).

TG Response: (Accepted)

TG will support a meeting with Aboriginal peoples to discuss the issues facing all Aboriginal harvesters associated with the continued decline of the herd.

ENR Response: (Varied)

ENR has received a request from co-management boards for support for a meeting of Aboriginal user groups and boards to determine an allocation (sharing formula) for Aboriginal harvest of BNE caribou. ENR supports this request and will assist with this process. ENR notes that determination of an allocation depends on agreement by all affected parties, and it may be difficult to reach agreement with all parties for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

Recommendation #9-2015

The Board recommends the continued requirement for authorization cards for harvest of BNE caribou within R/BC/01, R/BC/02 and R/BC/03 for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

TG and ENR agree with continuation of this measure for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

ENR Response: (Varied)

Correspondence with the SRRB indicates that Sahtú communities may want a different approach to managing BNE harvest in their region. ENR is open to discussing options for how the BNE harvest is managed outside Wek'èezhìi.

Recommendation #10-2015

The Board recommends that TG and ENR come to an agreement on whether the MCBCCA or Wildlife Management Units Subzones is the most effective way to differentiate between barren-ground caribou herds, and then implement, for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Following a number of discussions, leadership of TG and ENR met in October 2015 and agreed that a renewed version of the MCBCCA implemented in winter 2014-2015 with the approval of the WRRB should be continued in winter 2015-2016. There was agreement that subzones may be a preferable approach in the future and will be explored further, but defining these would need to include discussion with other communities (e.g. Lutsel K'e in the East and Sahtú region in the West). TG and ENR recognize that it is not feasible to implement subzones for the winter harvest season 2015-2016.

Recommendation #11-2015

The Board recommends that all commercial, outfitted and resident harvesting from the BNE caribou herd within Wek'èezhìi remain at zero for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

TG and ENR agree with continuation of this measure for the 2015-2016 harvest season.

Recommendation #12-2015

The Board recommends that recommendations #28 to 41 from 2010, as varied by ENR and TG, related to caribou monitoring remain in place.

• **WRRB Recommendation #28-2010**

The Board recommends the TG implement the Special Project, Using Tłı̨chǫ Knowledge to Monitor Barren Ground Caribou of the overall Traditional Knowledge (TK) Research and Monitoring Program.

TG Response: (Accepted)

This 2010 program will be revisited to consider its applicability in the 5 years since it was originally considered.

• **WRRB Recommendation #29-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the spring calf survival monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: Spring composition surveys to determine calf survival should continue. In addition, ENR should explore methods to improve estimation of cow mortality that do not involve large numbers of collars to better inform the interpretation of cow:calf ratios.

- TK: In listening to the oral narratives of Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' observations of the number of calves, cows and bulls along migration routes where caribou fences were once located.

TG Response: (Accepted)

TG notes that in its August 25, 2015 letter to WRRB, TG reiterated its support of even more collars to improve monitoring.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

Monitoring of spring cow:calf ratios from composition surveys in March or April has continued annually for the Bathurst and BNE herds since 2010 or earlier, and will be continued annually in coming years. A summary of spring cow:calf ratios collected up to 2014 for Bathurst and BNE caribou was included in a monitoring overview document from ENR in fall 2014. Collar numbers on Bathurst and BNE herds were increased to 50 (30 on cows, 20 on bulls) each in March 2015 with agreement of TG. Estimation of cow survival or mortality for these herds depends in part on collars but is carried out primarily using a population model that integrates all demographic information for the Bathurst and BNE herds.

- **WRRB Recommendation #30-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the health and condition monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: Cows should NOT be harvested specifically for health and condition monitoring. If appropriate per collection methodology, suitable samples from harvested caribou should be collected by Aboriginal harvesters in the community.

- TK: In listening to the oral narratives of Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' visual appraisals of fitness on hoof and sensory appraisals during skinning, butchering, preparing of meat and hides.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Caribou harvested from the Bathurst and BNE herds have not been taken specifically for health and condition monitoring since 2010.

Limited numbers of BNE cows have been sampled from winter harvest by Tłı̨chǫ monitors from this herd in recent years. A summary of condition data collected up to 2014 for BNE caribou was included in a monitoring overview document from ENR in fall 2014.

TG Response: (Accepted)

When data is documented by TK researchers it will be shared, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

- **WRRB Recommendation #31-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the birth rate monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: Birth rate estimates determined from composition surveys on the calving ground should continue.

- TK: In listening to the oral narratives of Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' observations of calves, cows and bulls on the barrens in the summer (post-birthing rate).

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Monitoring of birth rate estimates from composition surveys in June on the calving grounds has continued in years of photo surveys (every 3 years, last in 2015) for the Bathurst and BNE herds and reported in survey reports. This monitoring will be continued in coming years.

TG Response: (Accepted)

When data is documented by TK researchers it will be shared, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

- **WRRB Recommendation #32-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the adult sex ratio and fall calf survival monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: Fall composition surveys to determine adult sex ratio and calf survival should continue. As above, this should be augmented with better estimates of cow mortality to better inform the interpretation of bull/cow ratios.

- TK: In listening to Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' observations of numbers and behaviour of bulls, cows and calves.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Fall composition surveys to estimate sex ratio and cow:calf ratios have been carried out every 2-3 years for the Bathurst and BNE herds, and will be continued in coming years. Results up to 2014 were reported in an overview report for the 2 herds in fall 2014. Mortality rates of cows are estimated in years of population surveys from a population modeling process that considers in part collar-based mortality estimates but uses all demographic information for each of the two herds.

TG Response: (Accepted)

When data is documented by TK researchers it will be shared, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

- **WRRB Recommendation #33-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the estimate of herd size monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: A calving ground photo-survey should be conducted in June 2012.

- TK: In listening to Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' observations and their assessment of caribou abundance at key locations.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Calving photo surveys and estimates of herd size have been carried out for the Bathurst herd at 3-year intervals since 2003 (2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015) and will be continued at this interval (next in 2018).

Calving photo surveys and estimates of herd size have been carried out for the BNE herd in 2010, 2013 and 2015 and will be continued at 3-year intervals (next in 2018). Results of these surveys have been reported in ENR manuscript or file reports.

TG Response: (Accepted)

When data is documented by TK researchers it will be shared, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

- **WRRB Recommendation #34-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the wolf abundance (den occupancy) monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: To enhance the ability of managers to assess management actions in the future, appropriate indices of wolf abundance, wolf predation rates and population responses to changing caribou abundance should be developed and implemented.

- TK: In listening to the Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' observations and their assessment of wolf abundance associated with caribou.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Both TG and ENR accept that in this period of herd decline, a high priority should be placed on allocating sufficient resources to accurately assess management actions.

TG Response: (Accepted)

When data is documented by TK researchers it will be shared, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

ENR Response: (Varied)

Wolf den surveys in the Bathurst summer/fall range continued annually from 1996 to 2014, and were augmented by an MSc research project completed by M. Klaczek at the University of Northern British Columbia in 2015. ENR is planning a review of options for monitoring and management of wolves in the NWT in winter 2015 with the intent of assessing the feasibility of undertaking additional research and management actions. ENR notes that accurately monitoring wolf abundance, predation rates and population responses to prey abundance is challenging and may require substantially increased resources. These are potentially large commitments.

- **WRRB Recommendation #35-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the wolf condition and reproduction monitoring action as identified below:

- *Scientific: A carcass collection program and assessment of carcasses collected for physical condition and reproductive status should continue.*

- *TK: In listening to the Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' observations of the condition of wolves associated with caribou.*

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Wolf carcass condition monitoring has occurred in every winter since 2010 and summary results will be reported when available. As the wolf harvest has not substantively increased since 2010 in the Bathurst herd's range, and many of the wolves taken were from community landfills, they may not be representative of the free-ranging population of wolves on Bathurst and BNE caribou winter range.

TG Response: (Accepted)

When data is documented by TK researchers it will be shared, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

WRRB Recommendation #36-2010

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the wolf harvest monitoring action as identified below:

- *Scientific: Harvest data from a combination of carcass collection, fur sales, resident harvest questionnaires, and mandatory reporting of non-resident harvests should be collected.*

- *TK: Tłı̨chǫ researchers will manage the collection of Tłı̨chǫ harvest data.*

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Wolf harvest from the North Slave region and adjacent areas has been monitored since 2010 and reported at intervals in joint TG-ENR caribou management proposals and summaries made available to WRRB, including a monitoring overview of the Bathurst and BNE caribou herds to 2014 made available in fall 2014.

TG Response: (Accepted)

Tłı̨chǫ researchers will collect harvest data, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

• WRRB Recommendation #37-2010

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the state of habitat monitoring action as identified below:

- *Scientific: Landscape changes, including fires and industrial exploration and development, should be monitored to assess potential impacts to caribou habitat.*

- *TK: In listening to the Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' detailed observations of caribou habitat.*

TG Response: (Accepted)

TG will do the monitoring of such activity as its resources can handle, but it must be noted that TG is calling on GNWT, WRRB and industry to make the monitoring of exploration and development impacts on the herd a priority and hopes that future public meetings called by the WRRB will address this serious issue.

TG Response: (Accepted)

Tłı̨chǫ researchers will document observations of caribou habitat, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

As part of the range planning process for the Bathurst herd, mines, roads and exploration camps have been mapped along with foreseeable future developments where industrial development may occur in the next few years. A set of cumulative effects models developed by D. Russell and colleagues are being used to assess the possible effects of these developments on the Bathurst herd at the individual animal and population levels. Fires from 2014 and earlier years have been mapped and included as part of the Bathurst range planning process.

- **WRRB Recommendation #38-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and the TG implement the pregnancy rate monitoring action as identified below:

- *Scientific: Cows should NOT be harvested specifically for determining pregnancy.*

- *TK: In listening to the oral narratives of Tłı̨chǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters' visual appraisals of pregnancy and pregnancy of any cows harvested.*

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Caribou harvested from the Bathurst and BNE herds have not been taken specifically for pregnancy or health and condition monitoring since 2010. Limited numbers of BNE cows have been sampled from winter harvest by Tłı̨chǫ monitors in recent years and provided some information about pregnancy rates. A summary of condition data collected up to 2014 for BNE caribou was included in a monitoring overview document from ENR in fall 2014.

Pregnancy data have also been collected from caribou cows captured for collar placement in late winter (usually March) in years when captures have occurred.

TG Response: (Accepted)

Tłı̨chǫ researchers will document harvesters' visual appraisals of pregnancy and pregnancy of any cow's harvesters, however, much depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. TG depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

• **WRRB Recommendation #39-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR implement the density of cows on calving ground monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: Annual calving ground reconnaissance surveys should continue.

- TK: As Tłı̨chǫ harvesters have not gone to the calving grounds in the past, there is no suggested action.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Annual reconnaissance surveys over the Bathurst and BNE caribou calving grounds have been carried out in recent years; results to 2014 were reported in an overview document for the two herds in fall 2014. These surveys will be continued annually for at least the next 3 years.

• **WRRB Recommendation #40-2010**

The Board recommends TG implement the caribou harvest monitoring action as identified below:

- Scientific: Harvest data should not be collected through a scientific process as Tłı̨chǫ should collect and manage their own harvest data.

- TK: Tłı̨chǫ harvesters should report their caribou harvest to the TK researchers who will manage the harvest data

TG Response:

Harvest data received by Community monitors will be shared, however, a lot depends on the involvement of harvesters and trappers. Tłı̨chǫ Government depends on the voluntary cooperation of these people to provide data.

ENR Response: (Varied)

Caribou harvest information for the Tłı̨chǫ communities and other Aboriginal groups hunting the Bathurst and BNE caribou has been collected by ENR-led programs since 2010 by a combination of community monitors, check-stations and officer patrols. Community monitors have been hired in the winter in the 4 Tłı̨chǫ communities to assist with harvest data collection.

- **WRRB Recommendation #41-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and TG report on monitoring results to the WRRB and the general public a minimum of three times per year in April, September and December.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Monitoring of Bathurst and BNE caribou has been reported regularly at WRRB meetings and via meetings of the caribou technical working group attended by WRRB. Information on caribou status and management has been reported to the public via media releases, interviews and meetings with affected Aboriginal groups, boards and communities.

Recommendation #13-2015

The Board recommends that recommendations #42 and 43 from 2010 related to developing and implementing conservation education programs remain in place.

- **WRRB Recommendation #42-2010**

The Board recommends that the TG develops and implements a TK conservation education program to support the relationship and respect Tłı̨chǫ have for caribou. The program should be taught by elders and include: Tłı̨chǫ rules and their holistic approach to monitoring and managing their relationship with caribou; the idea of learning by travelling traditional trails so the "land" can be observed and monitored; and information on alternate resources to be harvested when caribou is scarce.

TG Response: (Varied)

As part of joint management, both TG and ENR have been advancing TK conservation issues. TG has been supporting the travelling of traditional trails and informing on alternate sources to be harvested in times of caribou scarcity. TG will renew its commitment to developing a program that informs on the Tłı̨chǫ approach to managing the relationship with the caribou.

- **WRRB Recommendation #43-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR develop and implement a scientific conservation education program to foster an increased appreciation of the resource. The program should be aimed at better harvesting and handling practices, increased knowledge of caribou and their role in the ecosystem, and an enhanced understanding of scientific management practices.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

ENR has promoted sound hunter harvest practices, reduction of wastage, harvesting bulls instead of cows, and related conservation education in NWT communities for a number of years.

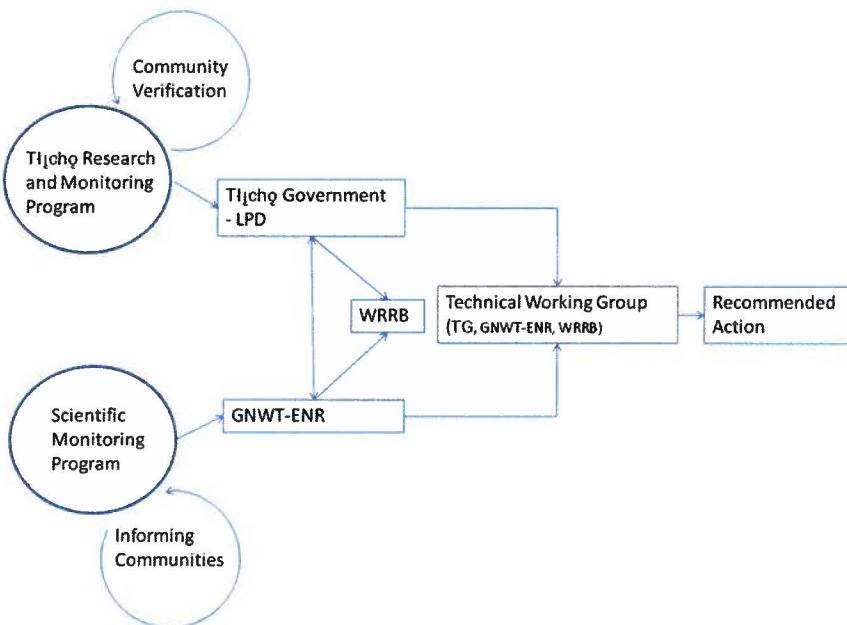
In response to community demands, we are currently developing a Hunter Education program. A working group met twice to develop the materials which are currently out for review with individuals, boards, agencies and organizations involved in the Wildlife Act creation.

Recommendation #14-2015

The Board recommends that recommendations #44 to #46 from 2010, as varied by ENR & TG, related to the adaptive co-management framework remain in place.

• ***WRRB Recommendation #44-2010***

The Board recommends that ENR and TG implement a process of information flow, review and assessment as described below in the figure.



• Fig. 1. Process of information flow, review and assessment.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

Information flow, review and assessment as envisioned in the 2010 joint TG-ENR caribou management proposal has generally been occurring as proposed.

• ***WRRB Recommendation #45-2010***

The Board recommends that the WRRB staff be a full participant in the Tłı̨chǫ-ENR Technical Working group without prejudice to the Board.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

The caribou technical working group has met a number of times since 2010, including several meetings in summer and fall 2015, to discuss caribou surveys and other monitoring, and possible management actions. WRRB, TG and ENR staff have participated in these meetings and TG and ENR expect to meet with WRRB staff at these meetings on an on-going basis.

• **WRRB Recommendation #46- 2010**

The Board recommends that criteria be developed by ENR and TG for assessing success or failure that would indicate when management actions are to be revised, including reinstatement of harvest for residents, outfitters and commercial tags. These criteria should be approved and implemented by the Technical Working Group.

TG Response: (Accepted)

ENR Response: (Varied)

An overall goal of joint management proposals from TG and ENR since 2010 has been to promote stabilization and recovery of the Bathurst herd. Benchmarks associated with stabilization and recovery were identified in the proposals and review was proposed at annual intervals and at 3-year intervals when new population estimates become available. A shift from a rapidly declining trend in the herd 2006-2009 to an approximately stable trend 2009-2012 suggested that this goal was being partially met. Since 2012, however, the Bathurst herd has declined further by a substantial amount and trend indicators including cow:calf ratios, pregnancy rates and estimated cow survival rates are not positive. The overall goal of a stabilizing and recovering herd is not being met. As a result, management of harvest, predators and land use is being reconsidered.

Reinstatement of harvest for residents, outfitters and commercial tags may be considered if the herd stabilizes and recovers, and if Aboriginal needs levels for caribou harvest can be met, as required by the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement. Criteria for management of non-Aboriginal harvest of Bathurst caribou could be considered under the overall Bathurst management process. Criteria for management of non-Aboriginal BNE harvest should follow guidelines provided by the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management plan for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West and BNE caribou herds, and as required by land claims in the Inuvialuit, Sahtú and Tłı̨chǫ land claim areas.

Recommendation #15-2015

The Board recommends that recommendations #47, 48, 50 and 51 from 2010, as varied by ENR & TG, related to development, habitat and wildlife management continue to be implemented.

• **WRRB Recommendation #47-2010**

The Board recommends ENR continue discussions with the Government of Nunavut (GN) for identifying opportunities for calving ground protection.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

The Nunavut Planning Commission held a workshop in late June 2015 in Iqaluit to review the draft Nunavut land use plan. One session was on caribou habitat and particularly on calving grounds. The GN presented a position opposing any development on any caribou calving grounds and the GNWT supported the GN's position. ENR has participated in environmental assessment (EA) processes in the NWT and Nunavut on proposed developments that could affect trans-boundary caribou herds, including Bathurst and BNE, and will participate in ongoing or new EA processes.

The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board held a workshop on caribou habitat protection, including calving grounds, in early November 2015 and ENR participated in this workshop.

• **WRRB Recommendation #48-2010**

The Board recommends ENR and INAC collaboratively develop best practices for mitigating effects on caribou during calving and post-calving, including the consideration of implementing mobile caribou protection measures.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

As part of the range planning process for the Bathurst herd, recommended limits to development on the herd's seasonal ranges (including calving and post-calving) are being developed. A number of options, including seasonal closures, mobile protection measures, industry best practices and preferred mitigation measures will be considered and recommended.

• **WRRB Recommendation #50-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and INAC monitor landscape changes, including fires and industrial exploration and development, to assess potential impacts to caribou habitat.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

As part of the range planning process for the Bathurst herd, mines, roads and exploration camps have been mapped along with foreseeable future developments where industrial development may occur in the next few years. A set of cumulative effects models developed by D. Russell and colleagues are being used to assess the possible effects of these developments on the Bathurst herd at the individual animal and population levels.

• **WRRB Recommendation #51-2010**

The Board recommends that ENR and TG assess the need for forest fire control in areas of important caribou habitat.

TG Response: (Accepted)

ENR Response: (Varied)

ENR has heard recommendations at several meetings about the importance of protecting key unburned caribou ranges from fire. Where possible, these areas have been identified and will be considered for fire-fighting. ENR notes, however, that priority for fire-fighting has been and will continue to be Values at Risk – communities, infrastructure and dwellings.

In addition, in big fire years like 2014, the number and extent of the fires may be such that some fires cannot be suppressed and portions of the NWT boreal forest will burn.

Recommendation #16-2015

The Board requests that study results focused on the Bathurst caribou herd, including studies of caribou winter range use in burned and unburned areas, the effects of insect harassment in the summer, ongoing studies via remote sensing of changes in vegetation quality on the summer range, a study of dust around the diamond mines in the Bathurst caribou herd range, and a study of the effects of the 2014 NWT fires on vegetation, be provided.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

A listing of the studies referred to above will be provided under separate cover with reports or papers where they are available. Some of the studies (e.g. dust study and study of 2014 fires) are in early stages thus only the proposals are available.

Recommendation #18-2015

The Board recommends that recommendations #52 and 53 from 2010 related to wolf management remain in place.

- **Recommendation #52-2010**

The Board recommends the harvest of wolves should be increased through the suggested incentives, except for assisting harvesters to access wolves on wintering grounds.

TG and ENR Response: (Varied)

Overall, increased incentives for wolf hunters and trappers have resulted in limited harvest of wolves in the North Slave region since 2010. Many of the wolves taken since 2010 were associated with community landfills or were harvested in areas not used in recent years by the Bathurst herd. TG and ENR will continue to develop approaches that may increase the harvest of wolves by hunters and trappers near the four Tłı̨chǫ communities in winter; the Bathurst mobile zone could be a target area for these efforts. TG agrees that the harvest of wolves should be increased and is in discussions with ENR about how that will be reflected in the Joint Management Proposal.

- **Recommendation #53-2010**

The Board recommends that focused wolf control not be implemented. If TG and ENR believe that focused wolf control is required, a management proposal shall be provided to the WRRB for its consideration.

TG Response:

Given the impact that Tłı̨chǫ believe wolves are having on the caribou, TG desires that there be a full discussion on all options for predator management and is in favour of more intensive predator management.

ENR Response: (Accepted)

Focused wolf control has not been implemented in any of the barren-ground caribou ranges to date in NWT. In view of the large recent declines and continuing declining trend in the Bathurst and BNE herds, ENR has committed to leading a comprehensive feasibility assessment of a range of wolf management options in winter 2015-2016. If more intensive predator management is to be considered, a management proposal would be submitted to WRRB.

Recommendation #19-2015

The Board recommends that collaborative work between TG, ENR and the WRRB towards long-term Bathurst caribou management continue.

TG Response: (Accepted)

ENR Response: (Accepted)

ENR has supported and provided funding towards meetings in 2013 and 2014 to increase the pace of work towards an overall Bathurst caribou management process, which could include a management board. ENR agrees that this process needs to be moved on at an accelerated rate and will strive towards this goal.

Recommendation #20-2015

The Board recommends that the above recommendations are implemented and that consultations regarding the recommendations take place, effective immediately.

TG and ENR Response: (Accepted)

TG and ENR have responded to the WRRB recommendations in this letter and consultations and meetings will follow as soon as practical in affected communities.