

NWT Wildlife Federation Submission to WRRB

The NWT Wildlife Federation represents the approximately 650 Resident Hunters of the NWT. The Federation has been active in the NWT for the past 28 years and has provided input into the Species at Risk Act as well as the proposed New NWT Wildlife Act. The NWT Wildlife Federation is the regional arm of the Canadian Wildlife Federation, a national body representing Provincial and Territorial Fish and Game Associations from across Canada. The NWT Wildlife Federation supports wildlife management based on sound proven scientific backed management practices.

As residents of the NWT, the members of the Federation have a vested interest in the Chamber of Commerce, City of Yellowknife, Chamber of Mines, Outfitters, Tourism Association, private corporations and individuals intervening in this important decision. As such we fully support the presentations and views of these interveners. Given the restricted time allotment I feel it is not prudent to repeat what is being presented by others.

I would like to outline some of the facts in this situation.

1. **Fact:** People have said caribou populations fluctuate on an estimated 30 Year cycle and some people have said we are at a low. There is little information to support this.
2. **Fact:** Harvesting of Bull Caribou has little if any effect on future herd size.
3. **Fact:** The harvesting of 53 Bull Caribou by Resident Hunters has no impact on future Caribou Herd size.
4. **Fact:** There is no mention of the Hyack Herd or Queen Maud Herd prior to approximately 1996. These Caribou were collectively called the Bathurst Caribou Herd until that time. ENR has changed the names of the Herds and has not reallocated the populations accordingly.

5. **Fact:** Previous ENR Biologist Anne Gunn has a bias against hunting and development in the north as can be seen in her testimony in the North Arrow case, participation in Mining Watch etc.
6. **Fact:** The harvesting of Female Caribou has a direct impact on the future herd size if the caribou populations are extremely low.
7. **Fact:** The harvesting of pregnant Female Caribou for the consumption of foetuses seriously impacts the future herd size.
8. **Fact:** 40 ft. truck loads of Caribou that have been taken for community hunts does impact the Caribou population.
9. **Fact:** NWT is the only region in Canada that does not have a harvest management plan.
10. **Fact:** ENR has not provided information that was requested by interveners to substantiate the number of Caribou in the Bathurst Herd.
11. **Fact:** According to the Alberta Research Council Report, ENR has not performed “good science” in the monitoring and counting of the Caribou.
12. **Fact:** Current decisions are being made based on poor science.
13. **Fact:** Many biologists and many other stakeholders question the validity of the ENR reports and conclusions.
14. **Fact:** The current population and reported decline of the Bathurst Herd is not substantiated by sound scientific data.
15. **Fact:** Cutting out resident hunters to stabilize or increase a herd population is not reasonable and necessary.

The above facts must be considered in the decision making process. The fact that Resident hunters take far less than 100 Bull Caribou and that this does not have any impact on the herd leads us to believe that the restricting the Resident hunter is purely a political move and has no basis on science or the future well being of the Caribou.

When we step back and look at the current actions of the Minister and the ENR department, I must question what is the motivation behind this. Science dictates that the killing of cows and especially pregnant cows has the greatest impact on herd populations. If the WRRB and Minister are not willing to stop (restrict) the killing of cow Caribou then the whole process is a waste. It appears that the Minister's decisions are based on reasons other than conservation.

We also question the shutting down of the outfitters. The bull Caribou that they harvest has minimal, if any, impact on future herd populations. Yet the Government is prepared to shut down a whole industry that is a key part of the economy of the north. This is also destroying many families whose livelihoods are derived from these businesses. This is simply not a fair process and leads all business to question what is behind these decisions. Could the mining industry be next? Will the minister decide that diamond mining and all exploration needs to be shut down for the Caribou to survive? What about other industries?

Can the WRRB say beyond any reasonable doubt that the Bathurst Caribou have declined from 300,000 animals to 30,000. There is an incredible amount of doubt, not just a few uncertainties. We must review the science, to date (including the last two years) by an independent source which is not hired by ENR and make decisions based on sound and independent scientific data.

We don't believe that the science requires a change in harvest levels at this time. If anything, we should allow a harvest of bulls only until good science can dictate how to move forward.

In closing we would suggest the following:

- Past data is reviewed by independent experts with no ties to ENR
- New monitoring takes place immediately by independent sources.
- A 5 year harvest management plan is put in place with input from all interveners.

Thank you.

Martin Knutson

President, NWT Wildlife Federation