

## North Slave Metis Alliance Comments – Joint Management Proposal for Kòk'èetì (Bathurst) Ekwò Herd

Submitted to the WRRB via website form, April 15, 2022, 16:52

Thank you for providing the North Slave Metis Alliance with the opportunity to provide comments on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East Management Proposals. Our comments can be applied to both proposals.

### 1. Harvest recommendations

The NSMA is supportive of maintaining a zero harvest of Bathurst caribou in the mobile protection zone. We are supportive of the decision to propose continued regular ground-based and aerial surveillance of the mobile zone throughout the winter harvest season. In discussions with ENR and fellow Indigenous governments and organizations, we would like to see consistent presence, surveillance and enforcement on the winter road. We have begun discussions with Tlicho and others on sharing the results of our monitoring programs and are in the process of determining the best approach moving forward on such collaboration.

As discussed with ENR (e.g., respectful harvester meetings, emails, one-on-one meetings), NSMA would like to be directly informed about matters related to illegal and disrespectful caribou harvesting. When poaching incidents occurred during the 2022 winter road season (ex. Feb 2022), we were not informed of them despite our request at the respectful harvester workshop (Jan 2022). Instead, we discovered the illegal harvesting through ENR's Facebook page or Cabin Radio.

### 2. Wolf management

The NSMA would like to reiterate that we cannot fully support the wolf harvest incentive program. Our Elders and harvesters have reported that wolves are not the most significant contributor to the decline of Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds. Wolf management appears to assume that just harvest and predation are limiting factors for the Bathurst herd. There is of course much more at play including climate change and intensifying levels of disturbance due to human activities. As noted in previous discussions on this topic, we may consider supporting the aerial removal program should the ground incentive program prove to be insufficient. However, we strongly believe more research on wolves is required first and we are pleased to see this work beginning. Research examining the influence of wolf removal on caribou calf survival is critical to making informed decisions.

### 3. Habitat and land use

A cumulative effects assessment tool as proposed would be valuable. Fire on winter ranges as always is important to try to manage. We should consider more of a 'farming with fire' approach to maintaining an adequate supply of productive caribou winter habitat.

#### 4. Education

The Tlicho Government and ENR are collaborating on training Tlicho monitors, so they can teach the Hunter Education Program. Would this training opportunity become available to other Indigenous groups as well?

Regarding the Respectful Harvesters workshops: NSMA was invited and participated in these meetings. We asked about the feasibility of stop and mandatory check-in roadblocks for vehicles exiting the ice road, including asking hunters for proof of group affiliation and license. We explained that we are fully supportive of increased RCMP presence. We requested a detailed breakdown of the types of crimes that are occurring on the ice road (and chargers laid). The NSMA is pleased to see many Indigenous groups willing to work together on this matter.

Education should include training and certification of firearms handling and marksmanship and proper harvesting and handling of game meat.

#### 5. Monitoring and Research

NSMA agrees that accurate monitoring and compliance with a TAH of zero for Bathurst caribou is a high priority. We agree that more research is needed to better understand predation rates and their significance on caribou, though research should not solely focus on wolves but also include grizzly bears, wolverines, and possibly lynx.

We believe that most people have a decent understanding of the need for a zero harvest for the Bathurst herd. Rather than assuming harvest and predation are the main drivers of decline and holding the population at a low level, further research on all factors affecting the caribou population is welcomed.

#### Consultation section

We think it would be beneficial to include a table that describes the outcome of these meetings or the responses that community members had to the topics being discussed.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

- NSMA