



Mr. Joseph Judas, Chair
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
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July 26, 2022

Dear Mr. Judas:

Joint Management Proposal for Sahtì (Bluenose-East) Ekwò Herd

The Tłı̨chǫ Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories have considered the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) recommendations on the Sahtì ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd received on May 27, 2022.

Please find attached our joint response to the WRRB recommendations. We look forward to working with the WRRB for the ongoing management of the Sahtì ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd.

Sincerely,

Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty
Tłı̨chǫ Government

Shane Thompson
Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Attachment

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Premier

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Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister
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Jimmy Noble Jr.
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Response to Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) Recommendations on a Joint Management Proposal for the Sahti Ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd

WRRB Recommendation # 1-2022 (Sahti Ekwò) – TG and GNWT will apply at least one method of estimating pregnancy rate in 2023, prior to the Sahti Ekwò calving season, in order to interpret calf survival during a July 2023 composition survey.

Response: VARY. The Tłıchq Government and the GNWT revise this recommendation to the following:

~~TG and~~ The GNWT will ~~apply at least one method~~ continue to assess methods of estimating caribou pregnancy rate in 2022-2023, prior to the Sahti Ekwò calving season, in order to interpret calf survival during a possible July 2023 composition survey.

Reasons: To date, the Tłıchq Government has not been directly responsible or involved in estimating pregnancy rates of Sahti Ekwò. The GNWT collects blood samples from collared caribou to assess pregnancy rates during the capture season. We remain committed to this approach while acknowledging sample sizes are limited. The GNWT collected 331 fecal samples in March 2020 during composition surveys from the ranges of the Bathurst (Kqk'èeti), Bluenose-East (Sahti) and Beverly herds. However, due to COVID-19-related delays, final analyses from one lab were not received until June 2022. The GNWT will summarize the results in a technical summary, and collaboratively assess with the Tłıchq Government and Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) opportunities to augment sample size, logistical challenges and costs to determine if use of this method is warranted.

WRRB Recommendation # 2-2022 (Sahti Ekwò) – TG and GNWT will come prepared to participate in a technical workshop and discuss technical monitoring questions, including statistical power for calving ground surveys, sample size for sex and age composition surveys and the impact of a changing age structure. WRRB will organize and hold this technical workshop during the summer 2022 with invitations to members of the Barren-ground Caribou Technical Working Group (BGCTWG), Government of Nunavut and statistical support as necessary.

Response: VARY. Tłıchq Government and GNWT revise this recommendation to the following:

TG and GNWT will come prepared to participate in a technical workshop and discuss technical monitoring questions, including statistical power for calving ground surveys, sample size for sex and age composition surveys and the impact of a changing age structure. WRRB will organize and hold this technical workshop during the ~~summer~~ fall / winter 2022/2023 with invitations to



members of the Barren-ground Caribou Technical Working Group (BGCTWG), Government of Nunavut and statistical support as necessary.

Reasons: Tłıchq Government and GNWT vary this recommendation mainly because the timing (summer 2022) may be challenging. We request preparatory discussions and materials ahead of time to ensure the workshop is as productive as possible. We note that GNWT Manuscript Report No. 289, *Optimal Survey Design, Survey Intervals and Analysis Strategies for Caribou Calving Ground Surveys, Reconnaissance Surveys and Composition Surveys* may provide useful context.¹

WRRB Recommendation # 3-2022 (Sahti Ekwò) – TG and GNWT, through the BGCTWG, will use the existing Adaptive Co-Management framework to reduce the gaps in available monitoring information about the Sahti Ekwò herd and to allow adjustments to be made if results are not achieved or if conditions change such that a different approach is warranted. Discussions will first occur in August 2022 as per the Framework's timeline with a summary of findings and discussion developed and shared with partner organizations.

Response: ACCEPT

Reasons: The Tłıchq Government and the GNWT accept this recommendation. Our two governments participated in developing the Adaptive Co-Management Framework with the WRRB and are committed to using the Framework to guide discussions and recommendations on monitoring and management of Sahti Ekwò.

WRRB Recommendation # 4-2022 (Sahti Ekwò) - TG and GNWT will expand ongoing Sahti Ekwò habitat conservation work to include the Sahti Ekwò herd range, beginning in 2022.

Response: ACCEPT

Reasons: The Tłıchq Government and the GNWT accept this recommendation. We will continue to work on advancing habitat conservation in areas of important caribou habitat such as water crossings and land corridors that facilitate migratory movements on the Sahti and Kqk'èeti Ekwò herd ranges. The GNWT undertook an analysis of all caribou collar data from the Sahti, Kqk'èeti and Beverly caribou herds to identify and categorize 10km hexagon areas of very high, high, medium and low use water crossings on the spring, summer and fall ranges of those herds. Similarly, the Tłıchq Government has identified areas of interest based on Tłıchq knowledge of

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https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/resources/survey_intervals_and_analysis_strategies_for_caribou_calving_ground_surveys_289_manuscript.pdf

key habitat features used by all herds in the Wek'èezhìi area. The Tłıchq Government and the GNWT will also continue to identify areas of important winter habitat for inclusion in the GNWT Fire Management Values-at-Risk decision making hierarchy.

WRRB Recommendation # 5-2022 (Sahtì Ekwò) - TG and GNWT will develop a plain language summary of the joint management proposal and the 2021 calving ground survey to assist with communications in the Tlıcho communities by August 31, 2022.

Response: ACCEPT

Reasons: The Tłıchq Government and the GNWT accept this recommendation. A plain language summary of the joint management proposal has been developed, as well as communication materials on the results of the 2021 calving ground survey. Engagement activities on calving ground survey results included presentations made to Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations (e.g. Section 15 meeting in November 2021, a status update on Bluenose-East caribou at the ACCWM meeting in November 2021, individual meetings with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations and the requested presentation to WRRB on the June 2021 surveys in December 2021), engagement letters to Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, a December 2021 press release and updated ENR website materials.

Timeline for Implementation of Previous Recommendations:

WRRB Recommendation #7-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò) – Legally enforceable habitat protection measures will ensure that practical recommendations identified by Tłıchq communities to minimize disturbance or protect important areas for ɛekwò are implemented.

Work with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations on advancing conservation areas in key caribou habitat such as water crossings and land corridors within Wek'èezhìi has been ongoing since January 2021. Some highlights of this work include a technical analysis of collar data to identify more frequently used crossings, legal review of legislation that could be used for protection and Indigenous Knowledge of key areas. GNWT will continue to support this work.

WRRB Recommendation #11-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò) – Fecal pellet collection on the Sahtì Ekwò winter range allows for an increased sample size and, therefore, a more representative pregnancy rate.

Results from the analysis of 331 fecal pellet samples on winter ranges of the Bathurst (Kòk'èeti), Bluenose-East (Sahtì) and Beverly herds collected in March 2020 as a pilot project will be reported to the WRRB by September 30th. The GNWT will summarize the

results in a technical summary, and collaboratively assess with the Tłıchq Government and Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) opportunities to augment sample size, logistical challenges and costs to determine if use of this method is warranted.

The Tłıchq Government was looking into a pilot project for the collection of fecal samples. Due to the lack of resources, the Tłıchq Government was not able to proceed but will support ENR in their fecal collection sampling efforts.

WRRB Recommendations #2B, 3B, 5B, 2016 – Comprehensive Tłıchq Knowledge studies are crucial to understand the holistic nature of the relationships between wildlife and with Tłıchq communities.

The comprehensive TK study planned in 2017 by Tłıchq Government has evolved into the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è Caribou Research Program. This program is holistic and includes information on predators, cumulative effects, and climate change, and addresses aspects of WRRB recommendations in 2016.

Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è Caribou research program has been undertaken by Tłıchq Government to take a holistic approach to what is happening with ekwò and the land. Tłıchq Government intends, through this program, address past recommendations by the Board. Tłıchq Government would like to engage with WRRB on both timing issues relating to these recommendations and how aspects of them, depending on available resources, can be addressed under the Ekwò Nàxoède K'è Caribou Research Program. In order to be consistent with the overall adaptive co-management approach in monitoring and data collection, we would suggest that in addition to the August 2022 proposed discussions referred to in Recommendation #3-2022, that Tłıchq Government will share the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è Caribou Research Program information and further a mutual understanding on how Tłıchq Government addresses past recommendations.