



Tłı̨chǫ Government

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Government of Northwest Territories / Gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

Mr. Grant Pryznyk, Chair  
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board  
4504 49<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE  
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 1A7

AUG 29 2016

Dear Mr. Pryznyk:

**WRRB Determinations #1-2016 and #2-2016, and Recommendations #1-2016, #2-2016, #3-2016, #4-2016, #5-2016, #6-2016 and #7-2016 from Decision Report on Bluenose-East Herd**

The Tłı̨chǫ Government (TG) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) have received and considered the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board's (WRRB) Final Report, Part A, entitled "*Report on a Public Hearing Held by the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board 6-8 April 2016, Behchokǫ, NT & Reasons for Decisions Related to a Joint Proposal for the Management of the Bluenose-East ʔekwǫ (Barren-ground caribou) Herd, Part A*". The Report was delivered to the parties on June 13, 2016, and we appreciate the WRRB's willingness to provide additional time for ENR and TG to respond to the final report. We also received the final report and decisions from the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) public hearing on the Bluenose-East (BNE) herd on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

TG and ENR met to discuss responses to WRRB on BNE caribou management. In this letter, TG and ENR will respond to the WRRB determinations and recommendations 1-7 on the Bluenose-East herd. Please note that we have also given consideration to the SRRB recommendations for the BNE herd, which do not include a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for the herd and support the Délı̨nę community caribou plan, and the possible Nunavut Wildlife Management Board recommendations for the BNE herd in Nunavut, which have not yet been issued.

Please find attached our joint response to the WRRB determination and recommendations included in the Final Report, Part A. We look forward to working further with the WRRB on management of the Bluenose-East caribou herd.

Sincerely,

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Department of Culture and Lands Protection,  
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**Attachment**

**c. The Honourable Bob Mcleod, Premier**

**Mr. Gary Bohnet, Principal Secretary, Office of the Premier**

**The Honourable Wally Schumann, Minister, ENR**

**Grand Chief Eddie Erasmus, TG**

**Ms. Laura Duncan, Tłıchǫ Executive Officer, TG**

**Ms. Jody Pellissey, Executive Director, WRRB**

**Ms. Shaleen Woodward, Acting Deputy Minister  
Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations**

**Dr. Erin Kelly, Acting Deputy Minister, ENR**

**Mr. Doug Pon, Ministerial Special Advisor to Minister Wally Schumann**

**Ms. Lynda Yonge, Director of Wildlife, ENR**

**Ms. Ada Elliott, Executive Administrative Coordinator to Minister Wally Schumann**

## ATTACHMENT

Determination #1-2016: The Board determines that a total allowable harvest of 750 bulls-only for all users of the Bluenose-East caribou herd within Wek'èezhìi be implemented for the 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 harvest seasons.

Response: TG and ENR accept this determination for Wek'èezhìi and thank the board for its strong focus on conservation and the need to limit harvest of this rapidly declining herd. ENR will amend regulations as needed to implement this determination in Wek'èezhìi and in the associated caribou management zones as soon as practicable.

Determination #2-2016: The Board determines that the proportional allocation of the total allowable harvest of the Bluenose-East caribou herd for the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 harvest seasons shall be as follows:

- Tłchq Citizens: 39.29%
- Members of an Aboriginal people who traditionally harvested Bluenose-East caribou (includes Nunavut): 60.71%.

TG should determine distribution of the allocation with Tłchq communities, and ENR should determine distribution of the allocation to members of an Aboriginal people who traditionally harvest Bluenose-East caribou in consultation with those groups.

Response: TG and ENR accept this determination for Wek'èezhìi. TG will address allocation of BNE caribou among the Tłchq communities. The WRRB-determined 39.29% of 750 caribou is 294.68 caribou for Tłchq harvesters, so we suggest rounding this number to 295 caribou as a whole number; this changes the percentage slightly to 39.33%. As recommended by WRRB, ENR will allocate the remaining harvest among other Aboriginal user groups of the BNE herd, taking into consideration the June WRRB report on the BNE herd, the SRRB report of late July 2016, and previous proposals for allocation for this herd. ENR will consult on a proposed allocation with Aboriginal user groups as soon as practicable.

Recommendation #1-2016: The Board recommends that TG and ENR come to an agreement on the most effective wildlife management zone approach to differentiate between caribou herds, and then implement the approach with criteria for managing any overlaps between herds, for the 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19 harvest seasons.

Response: In our response dated June 29, 2016 on WRRB determinations and recommendations for the Bathurst herd, TG and ENR described a revised version of the Bathurst mobile no-harvest zone that they had agreed on. Details of that option are set out in Appendix "A". We note that regulations required for the Bathurst mobile zone are already in place and will be modified as quickly as practicable to reflect the updated definition of mobile zone boundaries as listed in Appendix "A". ENR will amend regulations to reflect the WRRB determination for BNE harvest within Wek'èezhìi as soon as practicable.

Recommendation #2-2016: The Board recommends that TG and ENR provide weekly harvest updates to the WRRB and the general public for the Bluenose-East caribou herd throughout the fall and winter harvest seasons for the 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19.

Response: to follow under response #3

Recommendation #3-2016: The Board recommends that TG and ENR provide weekly updates to the WRRB and the general public on aerial and ground-based compliance surveillance of the Bluenose-East caribou herd throughout the fall and winter harvest seasons for 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19.

Response on Recommendations #2 and #3: As noted in the June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 joint response to the WRRB on recommendations for Bathurst caribou, the GNWT is currently going through a period of severe fiscal restraint and budget reduction. It is not possible for ENR to commit to weekly aerial monitoring of harvesting areas where Bluenose-East caribou are being harvested during winter. As in previous winters, areas where Bluenose-East caribou are being harvested will be monitored by a combination of community monitors, a game-check station on the winter road to the Tłı̄ch̄ communities, aerial reconnaissance surveys, and ground patrols on winter roads and trails in Bluenose-East range. Weekly updates on any new monitoring information on harvest and compliance will be provided to the WRRB, and periodic updates can be provided to the general public.

Recommendation #4-2016: The Board recommends that TG and ENR increase public education efforts and implement ENR's recently developed Hunter Education program in all Tłı̄ch̄ communities. ENR should also implement the Hunter Education program for Aboriginal people who traditionally harvest Bluenose-East caribou.

Response: In addition to ongoing ENR hunter education programs such as Sight your Rifle, Bear Safety, Pelt Handling, Take a Kid Trapping, and Caribou & People, ENR, in collaboration with respected hunters throughout the north, will be rolling

out a new Hunter Education program in the fall of 2017. This curriculum was developed in collaboration with representatives from Renewable Resources Boards, Wildlife Committees, and Hunters and Trappers Committees across the territory. While this new hunter education program is intended to meet the requirements of resident hunters under the Wildlife Act, the curriculum is designed to be adaptable on a community-by-community to incorporate traditional and local knowledge, and can also be used with community members who have Aboriginal or treaty rights to harvest. ENR will work with TG and the Tłıchǫ communities on the best ways to implement programs in Tłıchǫ communities. We anticipate that localized content will be available soon after the initial rollout and adapting the curriculum for use in communities will be an ongoing process.

ENR will also work with TG to enhance public education efforts with a particular focus on providing information to communities on what is happening with the caribou herds and why specific management actions are being taken to increase understanding and compliance with management actions.

**Recommendation #5-2016:** The Board recommends that TG negotiate caribou harvesting overlap agreements with Nunavut and the Sahtú region to make certain that existing relationships endure.

**Response:** This recommendation was addressed in previous discussions with WRRB and the Chief's Executive Council has authorized staff to initiate discussions with Nunavut and Sahtú.

**Recommendation #6-2016:** The WRRB recommends that if the Community-based Dìga Harvesting Project is to be expanded to other Tłıchǫ communities, a management proposal must be submitted to the WRRB for review and approval.

Further, if the Project is to be expanded in scope, prior to the submission of a management proposal to the WRRB, an index of changing wolf abundance must be available and research on habitat quality and quantity on the Bluenose-East caribou range must be conducted.

**Response:** If the community-based TG-led wolf harvest pilot project is to be expanded, a management proposal will be submitted to the WRRB.

**Recommendation #7-2016:** The WRRB recommends TG and ENR support a collaborative feasibility assessment of options for dìga management, led by the Board.

Response: A working group with representatives of ENR, WRRB, TG, NSMA and YKDFN has been meeting in summer 2016 to collaboratively develop the wolf management feasibility assessment for the Bathurst range in the NWT. Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) has been invited to participate in the working group. As noted in the TG and ENR joint management proposal on the Bluenose-East herd, methods being developed for the feasibility assessment underway for the Bathurst herd could be extended to the Bluenose-East herd's range, once the Bathurst assessment is complete. The working group that is developing the feasibility assessment for the Bathurst herd could be re-configured to consider wolf management in the range of the BNE herd.

## APPENDIX "A"

As a result of a number of discussions between TG and ENR, the approach to defining the Bathurst Mobile Core Conservation Zone (MCBCMZ) has been modified slightly from the initial two winters to reduce the number of times that the zone is re-defined, and make the zone more predictable and practical for hunters. The criteria for defining the zone for the 2016-2017 harvest season are expected to be as follows:

- The mobile zone boundary will be defined from a minimum convex polygon (MCP) around all functioning collars on Bathurst caribou (cows and bulls) plus a 60 km buffer around the MCP.
- Where collared Bathurst caribou show distinct, well-separated sub-groups, the mobile zone can be shaped as 2 or more parts of the mobile zone.
- Once established, the mobile zone boundaries will not change as long as all the collared Bathurst caribou remain within the mobile zone.
- If one or more collared Bathurst caribou move to within 5 km of the boundary of the zone or move out of the mobile zone, the mobile zone will be re-defined based on the same method described above, and the new zone boundaries will be in effect as long as all collared Bathurst caribou remain within the new boundaries.
- With respect to areas where collared Bathurst caribou may overlap with collared Bluenose-East or Beverly and Ahiak caribou, the WRRB determination of a zero (0) harvest on the Bathurst herd means that no caribou will be harvested within the mobile zone, regardless of herd affiliation. The possibility of dividing the mobile zone into two or more parts provides some flexibility with respect to identifying areas where collared caribou from neighbouring herds may be found and where some harvest is possible provided there are not Bathurst collars in the area.
- The mobile zone will be defined in the NWT beginning when collared Bathurst caribou move back into the NWT, potentially as early as mid-summer, and will continue until the end of the winter harvest season.
- TG and ENR will explore ways of modifying zone boundaries to use natural features such as rivers or lake edges as a way of making the zone more practical for hunters, provided that there is no significant reduction in protection for the Bathurst herd. Review of the mobile zone boundaries from winter 2015-2016 suggests that from about the end of November to the end of March, there was little directional movement of collared Bathurst caribou and a relatively fixed zone may be possible. Boundaries on the land that are readily recognized by hunters would be very helpful to both harvesters and enforcement officers.

- TG and ENR will also explore ways of making information about the mobile zone location more easily accessible to hunters by making it available in formats for GPS devices and Google Earth, and by using flagging tape on the winter road to show the direction of the zone boundary.