



January 15, 2025

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**Re: WRRB Reasons for Decision Report – 2024 Sahtı Ekwò Management Proceeding**

Dear Ms. Steinwand-Deschambeault and Ms. Sayine-Crawford:

The Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) is pleased to submit its final Reasons for Decision report, entitled "*Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board Recommendations and Reasons for Decision on Management Actions for Sahtı Ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd*" to the Tłı̨chọ Government (TG) and Department of Environment & Climate Change (ECC), Government of Northwest Territories in response to the "*Joint Proposal on Management Actions for the Bluenose-East Barren-ground caribou (Sahtı ekwò) Herd 2024-2026*". The Reasons for Decision final report will be posted to the public registry: <http://wrrb.ca/public-information/public-registry>.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at (867) 873-5740 or [jpellissey@wrrb.ca](mailto:jpellissey@wrrb.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Judas".

Joseph Judas  
Chair

Attachment

Cc Michael Birlea, Manager  
Culture and Lands Protection, Tłı̨chọ Government

Dr. Brett Elkin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Director, Wildlife and Forest Management  
Environment and Climate Change, Government of the Northwest Territories

# **Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board Recommendations and Reasons for Decision on Management Actions for Sahti Ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) was established to perform the wildlife management functions set out in Chapter 12 of the Tłıchǫ Agreement and shares responsibility for the monitoring and management of the Sahti Ekwò (Bluenose-East caribou) herd. On August 1, 2024, the Tłıchǫ Government (TG) and the Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), submitted the joint management proposal, entitled “*Joint Management Proposal for Sahti (Bluenose-East) Ekwò Herd*”<sup>1</sup> to the WRRB. The joint management proposal is for the period of December 1, 2024 to July 1, 2026.

Previously, the WRRB concluded that a conservation concern existed for the Sahti Ekwò herd. As such, the Board made a determination for the Sahti Ekwò herd for a herd-wide total allowable harvest (TAH) of 750 bulls only in 2016<sup>2</sup> and a reduced TAH of 193 bulls in 2019<sup>3</sup>. The Board also recommended, to TG and GNWT, that additional management actions were vital for herd recovery.

The WRRB understands the short-term goal of the current joint management proposal is to promote conditions that will allow for the continued recovery of the Sahti Ekwò herd while working towards the longer-term goal of enabling a sustainable Ɂekwò (barren-ground caribou) harvest that meets the needs of Indigenous communities across the Sahti herd's range. Further, the Board understands the joint management proposal to include management and monitoring actions in the following categories, as defined in the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management's (ACCWM) “*Taking Care of Caribou Management Plan*”<sup>4</sup>: harvest, monitoring and research, land use and habitat, predators, and education. More specifically, TG and GNWT proposed adjusting the current herd-wide TAH from 193 bulls only to 395 bulls only for the Sahti Ekwò herd.

## **2.0 Summary of 2024 Joint Management Proposal and WRRB Process**

Based on the WRRB's Rule for Management Proposals, the WRRB determined to undertake a modified Level 1 review. As such, the Board initiated its 2024 Sahti Ekwò Management Proceeding on August 19, 2024, including the establishment of an online public registry: <https://www.wrrb.ca/public-information/public-registry>. The proceeding was conducted in accordance with the WRRB's *Rules of Procedures, May 16, 2024*<sup>5</sup>.

On August 19, 2024, public notice of the WRRB decision to open a proceeding concerning the possible setting of an increased TAH for the Sahti Ekwò herd was provided to potentially interested public in and out of Wek'èezhì via email, WRRB website, social media, radio, newspaper, and Tłıchǫ community bulletin boards. Notifications of the revised proceeding schedules were posted publicly on September 18 and 26, 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> [Joint Management Proposal for Sahti \(Bluenose-East\) Ekwò Herd, 2024.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [2016 Reasons for Decision Related to a Joint Proposal for the Management of the Bluenose-East Ɂekwò \(Barren-ground Caribou\) Herd - Part A.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [WRRB Reasons for Decision Final Report – Sahti Ekwò \(Bluenose-East Caribou\) Herd, 2019.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Taking Care of Caribou: The Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou Herds Management Plan, 2021.](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wrrb.ca/sites/default/files/WRRB%20Rules%20of%20Procedure%20Revision%20FINAL%2016may2024.pdf>

Interested organizations were required to register as participants via the Board’s website by August 30, 2024. One organization registered by the deadline date: the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB). Full participant status was granted to NWMB on September 5, 2024.

To obtain the information necessary for the WRRB to consider as part of the record of this proceeding, one round of Information Requests (IRs) was issued to the registered Parties on September 9, 2024, with a deadline for responses on September 23, 2024. On September 17, 2024, TG and GNWT requested a two-week extension to provide their responses. The Board approved the extension request on September 17, 2023. TG and GNWT provided their responses on October 7, 2024. The IRs and responses are all available on the online public registry.

The public record was closed on October 9, 2024. Final written arguments were submitted by the NWMB on October 16, 2024, and by TG and GNWT on October 18, 2024. The Board reviewed all the information available on the record for this matter in November and December 2024 and made the following decisions.

### **3.0 Evidence provided by TG**

TG has been operating the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K’è ʔekwò monitoring program on Deèzàati (Point Lake) since 2020. Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K’è or “*Boots on the Ground*” is a ʔekwò monitoring program based on the traditional knowledge of the Indigenous elders and harvesters. Faced with challenges from the decline of ʔekwò herds and harvest limitations, TG initiated the program to collect critical field knowledge of ʔekwò herds and their habitats.

During fall 2022, the Sahti Ekwò were in overall good body condition and healthy. Adult bulls and cows were described as “good and fat.” Bulls had large antlers, white neck manes, new and clean coats, and rounded rumps and backs due to thick fat layers on their backs. Of the 136 bulls observed, 76% were fat, 24% were good, and none were skinny. For the cows, they had new clean coats and straight and rounded backs due to the fat layer on their back. Of the 143 cows observed, 73% were fat, 27% were in good condition, and none were skinny. During fall 2023, all the Sahti Ekwò appeared healthy and in good body condition. Most cows were “fat” and described as “good.” The teams assessed body conditions of all the bulls (100%) as fat, and no bulls observed as thin. Eighty-nine percent of the cows were fat, 7% in good condition, and one skinny cow was noted.

An elder noted that most adult ʔekwò showed very large bellies:

*“Before (until the 2000s) when we hunt on barrenlands around Rawalpindi Lake, the caribou did not have large bellies as we see now; before people [hunters, outfitters] were bothering caribou, chasing them around, and they could not settle down to relax in one area as now. Now we see them eating and resting all day; their belly gets big”.*

For the 38 tsia (calves) observed in fall 2022, 87% were in good condition and 13% were fat. In fall 2023, 16 tsia were observed in nine groups; 44% were fat, 56% in good condition, and no thin tsia were seen. The tsia appeared healthy, and many had grown larger body size at the end of September. At times, it was challenging to differentiate between a tsia and yearling. In some instances, tsia had grown almost as tall as their mothers, and their antlers had grown longer than what is considered a “normal” short antler of a tsia.

During September 2022, 31 ɛkwò groups were observed with 195 cows and 76 calves, and estimated 38.4 calves per 100 cows ( $\pm 7.0$  SE). During 2023, the calf: cow ratio of 60.3 ( $\pm 10$  SE) calves per 100 cows was estimated, based on 19 ɛkwò groups with a total of 46 cows and 28 calves.

In many herds, there was a high proportion of young ɛkwò, aged 2-3 years old called yèagoa (young bulls) and tsidaa (young cows). An elder explained that it is a good sign to see many tsidaa and yèagoa as this means many tsia and yearlings survived overwinter and could help the population grow.

*"You can tell all caribou around here are young, because of the way they are moving. They are moving fast – bouncing & trotting."*

During September 2022, the ɛkwò habitat and forage were in overall good condition. In early September, the vegetation was generally moist and had grown well throughout the summer. During the last two weeks of September, the adzìì (lichen) showed very good quality, moist and fluffy. In late August, ɛkwò were observed mostly eating the leaves and branches of willows, but by mid-September, the leaves had fallen off, and the ɛkwò fed primarily on adzìì. During late fall 2023, ɛkwò habitat was in good quality. However, vegetation was dry in mid-September, due to drought conditions in the region during the summer. By the last week of September, the vegetation conditions improved due to rain, overnight moisture, and fog which made adzìì moist.

*"Everywhere we have gone through has nice wet lichen. The food is good for them here. Looks like they are eating lots."*

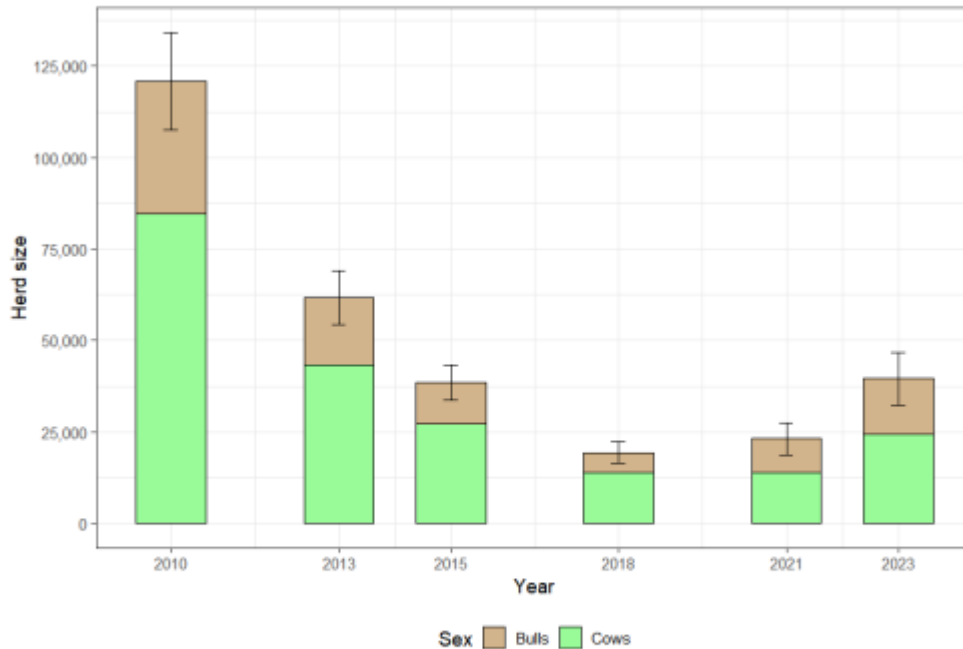
During July and August 2023, the tundra was very warm and dry. Grass meadows that should have standing water, ponds, and most small creeks were dry. During August, insect activity was very low, likely due to the heavy smoke from forest fires and dry conditions. During early August, dwarf birch showed yellow and brown leaves when plants would be expected to be prime. The lack of rain throughout summer resulted in decreased water levels. During the third week of September, the smoke was thick, and it became hard to spot ɛkwò in the hills. The elders expressed concern about the effects of smoke and ashes on ɛkwò forage, and uncertainty of the impacts to the land and wildlife. Even in early October, the forest fire smoke was covering the hills; the elder stated:

*"It used to snow mid-September – now there is more smoke than snow".*

*"We don't know what that smoke and ashes means for the caribou food and what they eat."*

#### **4.0 Evidence Provided by GNWT**

The Sahtì Ekwò herd was estimated at about 120,000 ɛkwò in 2010. The herd declined by about 84% over eight years to an estimated 19,300 in 2018. The June 2021 estimate of 23,200 ɛkwò indicated that the herd had possibly stabilized. In 2023, the herd was estimated at 39,500 ɛkwò, a significant increase from 2021.



**Figure 1. Bluenose-East herd estimates 2010-2023 based on calving ground photo surveys (mean ± 95% Confidence Interval (CI)).**

The annual estimates of Sahtì Ekwò collar-based cow survival for 2020 (83%), 2021 (85%) and 2022 (81%) averaged 83%, which is consistent with a stable trend.

The proportion of breeding females was 87.5% in 2019, 91.9% in 2021, 86.2% in 2022 and 80.9% in 2023. Anecdotal observations during the June 2021 and 2023 composition surveys suggested that there were an increased numbers of cows with twins since 2019, although the extent of the twinning is difficult to estimate.

Fall surveys of the Sahtì Ekwò herd in October 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 resulted in estimates of 51.7, 49.6, 52.3, and 51.4 calves per 100 cows, respectively. Fall composition surveys near the peak of the rut can also give an estimate of the bull: cow ratio as all sex and age classes are mixed. In October 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 estimates were 63.3, 68.7, 64.8 and 58.2 bulls: 100 cows, respectively.

Demographic indicators were generally consistent with a moderate increase from 2021 to 2023 (7-11% per year) compared to the rate indicated by the survey estimates from those two years alone. The herd estimates from 2021 to 2023 indicated a 31-32% annual rate of increase, which is biologically unlikely and difficult to reconcile with other demographic indicators and population modeling. One potential explanation is that 2018 and 2021 herd estimates were lower due to poor visibility of ɛkwò on the calving grounds during visual portions of the survey. In contrast, calving ground survey conditions were excellent in 2023, indicating a clear increase in the herd in 2023.

Guidance for management and monitoring of the Sahtì Ekwò herd is provided in the ACCWM’s *“Taking Care of Caribou: The Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East Barren-ground*

*Caribou Herds Management Plan*” (2021). Under the *Taking Care of Caribou Management Plan*, the ACCWM develops annual action plans that outline herd-specific management actions based on the status of the herd. The Management Plan sets out that each herd’s status will be determined based primarily on the estimate of the overall size of the herd as well as the population trend and additional monitoring indicators. ACCWM assessed the Sahti Ekwò herd status colour zone to be yellow in 2024, representing intermediate and increasing numbers.

## **5.0 Evidence Provided by NWMB and the Public**

In March 2024, the NWMB reviewed a recommendation from the Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association to increase the TAH for the Sahti Ekwò herd from 170 to 450 ʔekwò and to remove the non-quota limitation on female ʔekwò harvests.

During their deliberations, NWMB considered both scientific research and community observations regarding the herd's population trends. According to the most recent calving ground and fall composition surveys, the Sahti Ekwò population grew from 23,202 animals in 2021 to 39,525 in 2024, with high pregnancy rates and favourable calf-to-cow ratios observed from 2019 to 2023. These promising signs of recovery were supported by local knowledge, where community members, including those in Kugluktuk, reported increased sightings of cows with calves and of healthy, robust ʔekwò returning to traditional migration routes. In 2023, the ACCWM acknowledged this evidence of recovery, revising the herd’s population trend to “likely increasing.” The NWMB also considered modelling data from the GNWT, which suggested that harvesting approximately six hundred male ʔekwò annually—representing roughly 1.5% of the population—would not negatively impact the herd, provided the current growth trend continues.

Based on this evidence, the NWMB determined that increasing the Kugluktuk TAH to 450 caribou, along with the removal of the non-quota limitation, which had restricted the harvest to a 1:1 female-to-male ratio and limited the number of ʔekwò cows that could be harvested, would not raise immediate conservation concerns. The NWMB recognizes the shared nature of the Sahti Ekwò herd and that ʔekwò remain vital to both Northwest Territories and Nunavut harvesters.

The WRRB received no comments from the public.

## **6.0 WRRB Determinations & Recommendations**

### **6.1 Harvest**

#### **6.1.1 Total Allowable Harvest**

Harvest of the Sahti Ekwò herd in recent years has been managed in three land claim regions: Sahtú Settlement Area, Wek’èezhìi, and Nunavut. Total harvest reported was 204 ʔekwò for 2018-2019, 164 for 2019-2020, and 246 for 2020-2021. Harvest information was incomplete for 2021-22 and 2022-23 and is pending for 2023-24. On average, 205 ʔekwò were taken from the herd based on harvest reported for three years up to 2020-21.

In March 2024, the NWMB recommended, and in May 2024 the Government of Nunavut accepted, an increased TAH from 170 to 450 Sahti Ekwò for the Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association along with

removal of the non-quota limitation of a 1:1 harvest sex ratio requiring that cow harvest be 50% or less of the total Sahti Ekwò harvest.

TG held a two-day ʔekwò workshop for T̄hçq elders and harvesters in November 2023. Two main recommendations emerged: 1) “*Keep harvest the same for now*”, elders suggested a precautionary approach, keeping harvest the same and continuing management actions until longer term signs from both traditional knowledge and science are seen confirming the herd recovery; and 2) “*Small TAH increase*”, elders discussed the option of a small increase in harvest, for the sole purpose of reinstating the traditional practice of a fall community hunt.

GNWT noted that herd trends in the Sahti and Kòk’èetì (Bathurst) Ekwò herds have shown that changes can happen quickly. For example, the Kòk’èetì Ekwò herd appeared to stabilize from 2009 to 2012 after a very rapid decline from 2006 to 2009 but has since declined further based on surveys from 2015 to 2022, even under complete harvest restrictions in the NWT.

Based on the NWMB decision, on T̄hçq elder’s advice, and on uncertainties around the rate of the Sahti Ekwò herd increase in 2023, the TG and GNWT propose that Indigenous harvest of the Sahti Ekwò herd in Wek’èezhì be adjusted from 193 bulls per year to 395 bulls per year, which represents 1% of the most recent population estimate. Resident, non-resident, and commercial harvest from this herd is proposed to remain at zero.

In the T̄hçq Agreement, a TAH level is defined as “*in relation to a population or stock of wildlife, the total amount of that population or stock that may be harvested annually*” (i.e. a TAH is a specific number of ʔekwò that can be harvested from a particular herd). As set out in Section 12.5.5(a)(i) of the T̄hçq Agreement, the WRRB has sole responsibility for making a final determination with respect to a TAH for Wek’èezhì.

A harvest of 395 Sahti Ekwò in Wek’èezhì plus 450 in Nunavut is a total herd harvest of 2.1%. TG and GNWT are confident the Sahti Ekwò herd have increased by 11-12% per year from 2018-2023. Harvest modeling conducted using the most recent population and demographic estimates for the Sahti Ekwò herd suggests that a total harvest of 2.1% of the herd, whether bulls, cows, or a mix of the two, is likely to be sustainable and allow for continued herd recovery.

A TAH increase aligns with the ACCWM’s assessment of the Sahti Ekwò herd as being in a “yellow” status (intermediate and increasing) for 2024. The ACCWM’s *Taking Care of Caribou Management Plan* recommends that for a herd in the yellow status, limits on subsistence and resident harvest can be eased.

The WRRB agrees with TG and GNWT’s characterization that the Sahti Ekwò herd is starting to recover based on the recent calving ground surveys and summer observations made by the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K’è monitoring program. However, due to uncertainties with the technical evidence about the rate of recovery, the Board agrees with a precautionary strategy for managing the Sahti Ekwò herd until it is apparent that a recovery is securely underway.

Therefore, the WRRB makes the following determination:

**Determination #1-2024 (Sahti Ekwò):** A total allowable harvest of 395, bulls only, for all users of the Sahti Ekwò herd within Wek’èezhìi is to be implemented by the TG and GNWT for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 harvest seasons.

### 6.1.2 Harvest Allocation

Section 12.5.5(a)(ii) of the Tìchq Agreement states that “*the WRRB shall make a final determination about the allocation of portions of any TAH for Wek’èezhìi to groups of persons or for specified purposes*”.

TG and GNWT participate and engage in collaborative Sahti Ekwò co-management processes with harvester groups across the herd’s range, recognizing and respecting management processes that are in place for Sahti Ekwò in jurisdictions outside of Wek’èezhìi.

In consideration of the TAH increase for Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association, TG and GNWT propose an allocation that is proportional to the TAH allocation for NWT harvester groups from WRRB Determination #2-2019 and does not include an allocation to Nunavut.

Harvester Group	Allocation of TAH per WRRB Determination #2-2019	Proposed allocation of TAH of 395 bulls	
		Proportion	TAH
Tìchq	76	0.613	243
Sahtú	33 (30 <sup>1</sup> )	0.266	106 (30 <sup>1</sup> )
Dehcho	3	0.024	9
Inuvialuit	2	0.016	6
NWTMN	3	0.024	9
Akaitcho	4	0.032	13
NSMA	3	0.024	9
Kugluktuk (NU)	69 (170 <sup>2</sup> )	--	-- (450 <sup>3</sup> )
<b>Total</b>	<b>193 (291)</b>		<b>395 (845)</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Belare Wile Gots’è ʔekwè – Caribou for All Time – A Déljñe Got’jñe Plan of Action 2021-2023 includes a harvest limit of 30 Bluenose-East caribou for Déljñe hunters in the Sahtú.

<sup>2</sup> On 26 March 2024, NWMB decided on a TAH of 170 Bluenose-East caribou for Kugluktuk HTO with a non-quota limitation of a 1:1 harvest sex ratio.

<sup>3</sup> On 28 May 2024, the Government of Nunavut accepted a TAH of 450 Bluenose-East caribou for Kugluktuk HTO along with removal of the non-quota limitation of a 1:1 harvest sex ratio.

**Determination #2-2024 (Sahti Ekwò):** The proportional allocation of the total allowable harvest of the Sahti Ekwò herd for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 harvest seasons shall be as follows:

- Tìchq Citizens: 61.3% (243 animals)



- Members of an Indigenous people who traditionally harvest Sahti ekwò (does not include Nunavut): 38.6% (152 animals)

TG should determine distribution of the allocation with T̄chq̄ communities, and GNWT should determine distribution of the allocation to members of an Indigenous people who traditionally harvest Sahti Ekwò in consultation with those groups.

## 6.2 Monitoring and Research

In 2019, increased monitoring of the Sahti Ekwò herd was recommended, due to the low population estimate and declining trend in 2018, including conducting calving ground photo surveys on a two-year interval.

Based on both scientific monitoring and information from the Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è program, the herd has stabilized and has begun to increase as of 2023. TG and GNWT propose to conduct a Sahti Ekwò population survey in 2025, then every three years thereafter. A survey two years after the 2023 survey should provide additional information on the increasing herd, allow for re-assessment of harvest management, and recognize the statement made by T̄chq̄ elders that ʔekwò should be left alone.

**WRRB Recommendation #1-2024 (Sahti Ekwò):** The Board recommends GNWT undertakes a Sahti Ekwò population survey in June 2025, then every three years thereafter.

The remaining monitoring and research actions proposed are unchanged from the previous WRRB 2019 and 2022 proceedings (Appendix A). Implementation by GNWT, and where appropriate by TG, should continue noting that equal priority should be given to conducting fall and late winter composition surveys, which is consistent with the ACCWM's *Taking Care of Caribou Management Plan*. Additionally, continued support to strengthen annual community-based monitoring and annual reporting of Sahti Ekwò demographics, body condition and health, and habitat across their range is necessary. Coordination with health monitoring in the Sahtu and Kugluktuk, Nunavut is essential to ensure adequate sample sizes. This evidence will support the T̄chq̄ philosophy of *Strong Like Two People*, allowing a more realistic way of linking monitoring to adaptive co-management.

## 6.3 Land Use and Habitat

Important landscape management strategies include habitat conservation and protection and limits to development. There is a need to continue monitoring and managing cumulative effects across the range and to provide protection for Sahti Ekwò during calving and post-calving.

Key habitat for Sahti Ekwò are places on the range that ʔekwò use for specific purposes during key times of their annual lifecycle. Calving areas, n̄ʔokè (water crossings), tataa (corridors between bodies of water; land bridges), and key winter ranges are some general examples of important habitat. In 2022, GNWT conducted a technical analysis of 25 years of ʔekwò collar data from the Sahti, K̄k'èeti, and Beverly Ekwò herds to identify, categorize, and map tataa as key habitat features. Ongoing work must continue to identify, prioritize, and legally protect key ʔekwò habitats.

Currently, there is limited development on the Sahti Ekwò range. Of a total range size of 294,975 km<sup>2</sup>, approximately 35.2 km<sup>2</sup> (0.0152%) has been disturbed through human and industrial land use.

Since 2021, Cumulative Effects Assessment work has been undertaken to develop landscape change and population dynamics models to visually communicate environmental trends and consequences of climate change, wildfire, and land-use scenarios on the habitat quality and population dynamics of five ʔekwò herds, including the Sahti Ekwò herd. The project has a high involvement from Indigenous communities that contribute to sharing and communicating about habitat changes and their impact on ʔekwò. Continuation of this project will lead to an improved understanding of the key vulnerabilities of the Sahti Ekwò herd with respect to habitat change.

The WRRB has made many recommendations regarding habitat, wildfires, and land uses since 2010 (Appendix B). Ongoing implementation of these recommendations ensures that important landscape strategies outlined above are met; as such, no new recommendations are required.

#### **6.4 Predators**

A five-year diga (wolf) management program was implemented from 2019-2020 to 2023-2024 with the goal of reducing wolves as the main year-round predator of ʔekwò to assist with recovery of the Sahti and Kòk'èeti Ekwò herds.

The diga management program consisted of three main components: 1) support for diga harvesters and the traditional economy, including training and incentives; 2) the use of aerial removals if harvest targets were not met through ground harvest; and 3) extensive research and monitoring. The WRRB did not support aerial removals in its 2021 Reasons for Decision on the Wolf Management Program and therefore, aerial removals were only conducted in 2020.

The five winters of management actions resulted in removal of 85 diga in 2020, 135 diga in 2021, 69 diga in 2022, 142 diga in 2023 and 97 diga in 2024 from areas where the bulk of the Sahti and Kòk'èeti Ekwò herds were wintering.

The diga management program ended in spring 2024. A comprehensive collaborative review of the entire five-year program is now underway. As such, no new recommendations are required; however, if TG and GNWT consider additional predator management actions are warranted in the future, a joint management proposal must be submitted to the WRRB.

#### **6.5 Education**

Continued effort by TG and GNWT is needed to increase education and public awareness among harvesters, communities, and the public about the status of the Sahti Ekwò herd and the need for conservation actions to promote and contribute to continued recovery. Community meetings are imperative given the relationship between Tìchq communities and ʔekwò. Plain language summaries of the joint management proposal, calving ground survey reports, Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è program reports, and Ekwò Harvest Monitoring Program reports are necessary to assist with communications in Tìchq communities.

No new recommendations are required.

## 7.0 Conclusion

It is encouraging to have both traditional knowledge and science confirm that the Sahti Ekwò are “*coming back*” to their old trails at Deèzàati, and that the herds are moving south to traditional Ṯchq̱ zekwò harvesting camps.

*“They are following their old trails that they used many years ago - they never forget them ... they always come back.”*

*“We have been here for many years now watching and protecting caribou, looks like they are coming back now.”*

~ Elder Joe Zoe

Increasing the total allowable harvest will allow the reinstatement of a fall community hunt ensuring the continuation of Ṯchq̱ culture, language, and way of life and the exchange of Ṯchq̱ knowledge from elders to youth.

The stabilization and growth of the Sahti Ekwò herd is a positive outcome after years of co-management efforts. Continued adherence to a precautionary approach and implementation of effective management actions, informed by both traditional knowledge and science, will enhance the potential for sustainable management and a lasting recovery.

## **APPENDIX A: WRRB Monitoring and Research Recommendations, 2010 to 2022, and TG & GNWT Responses**

Section 12.5.11 of the Tłıchǰ Agreement states that “each Party with power under its laws to implement a recommendation of the WRRB made under 12.5.5, 12.5.6, 12.5.7, 13.4.1 or 14.4.1 shall accept, reject, or vary such recommendation. In making its decision, each Party shall consult with any other Party or body with power to manage any aspect of the recommendation. Where a Party rejects or varies any recommendation received from the Board, it shall give its decision in writing, with reasons, to the Board and to the other Parties, and shall give public notice of that decision”.

### **2010**

**Recommendation #28:** The Board recommends the Tłıchǰ Government implement the *Special Project, Using Tłıchǰ Knowledge to Monitor Barren Ground Caribou* of the overall TK Research and Monitoring Program.

- **VARY:** The Tłıchǰ Government will be implementing the project based on its obligations and commitments pursuant to the provisions in the Tłıchǰ Agreement. Start date of the TK Research and Monitoring Program is anticipated in summer 2011.

**PREAMBLE #29-39:** The Tłıchǰ Government agrees with the recommendations 28-42 of the Recommendation Report related to the Revised Joint Proposal on Caribou Management Actions in Wek’èezhìi. We are committed to documenting and reporting on observations and trends observed by caribou harvesters and elders. Implementation of the ‘Tłıchǰ Knowledge Research and Monitoring Program: Special Project, Using Tłıchǰ Knowledge (to Monitor Barren Ground Caribou)’ will take approximately eight months.

The traditional monitoring system continues among the harvesters and elders. Nevertheless, the logistics of realizing a system that will rigorously and accurately document and report harvesters’ observations and trends has yet to be initiated. The program requires trained Tłıchǰ researchers, offices, and equipment, all of which requires a realistic annual budget and extensive fundraising with those who will also benefit from Tłıchǰ knowledge research and monitoring.

**Recommendation #29:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tłıchǰ Government 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 Tłıchǰ 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.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #30:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tłıchǰ Government 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 Tł̨ch̨q̨ 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.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #31:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tł̨ch̨q̨ Government 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 Tł̨ch̨q̨ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ observations of calves, cows, and bulls on the barrens in the summer (post-birthing rate).

- **VARY (ENR):** Birth rate information will be collected in different ways for different herds.
  - For example, the size of the Ahiak and Bathurst caribou herds is estimated using the calving ground photo census surveys. Birth rate is estimated from a composition survey that is conducted on the calving ground right after the photo census.

- This photo census technique is not usually used for the Bluenose-East herd (rather, herd size is estimated from a post-calving ground photo census survey). Instead, pregnancy rates are based on information collected from harvested Bluenose-East cows, and indirectly from composition surveys that assess the calf:cow ratio.

**Recommendation #32:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tł̨ch̨q̨ Government 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 Tł̨ch̨q̨ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ observations of numbers and behaviour of bulls, cows, and calves.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #33:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tł̨ch̨q̨ Government 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 Tł̨ch̨q̨ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ observations and their assessment of caribou abundance at key locations.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #34:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tł̨ch̨q̨ Government 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 Tłıchǵ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ observations and their assessment of wolf abundance associated with caribou.

- **VARY (ENR):** ENR will continue with current wolf den surveys, which provide an index of wolf abundance. ENR in consultation with the Tłıchǵ Government will provide a proposal with potential options and costings that are relevant to wolf monitoring, research, and management.

The Parties will continue to explore new options with respect to monitoring and managing wolves.

**Recommendation #35:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tłıchǵ Government 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 Tłıchǵ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ observations of the condition of wolves associated with caribou.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #36:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tłıchǵ Government 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 – Tłıchǵ researchers will manage the collection of Tłıchǵ harvest data.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #37:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tłıchǵ Government 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 Tłıchǵ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ detailed observations of caribou habitat.

- **VARY (ENR):** ENR will continue to provide an annual report to the WRRB and Tłıchǵ Government on fire activity. ENR expects a number of research projects investigating the impact of fires on caribou habitat to be completed in 2012 and will provide an annual progress report to the WRRB and Tłıchǵ Government.

ENR will continue to explore new ways to monitor landscape change driven by industrial exploration and development with our partners (e.g., INAC).

**Recommendation #38:** The Board recommends that ENR and the Tłıchǫ Government 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 Tłıchǫ harvesters, the TK researchers should document the harvesters’ visual appraisals of pregnancy and pregnancy of any cows harvested.

- **ACCEPT (ENR)**

**Recommendation #39:** 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 Tłıchǫ harvesters have not gone to the calving grounds in the past, there is no suggested action.

- **VARY (ENR):** ENR will undertake these surveys for the Bluenose-East, Bathurst and Ahiak herd in 2011 and 2012.

**Recommendation #40:** The Board recommends Tłıchǫ Government implement the *caribou harvest* monitoring action as identified below:

- TK – Tłıchǫ harvesters should report their caribou harvest to the TK researchers who will manage the harvest data.
- Scientific – Harvest data should not be collected through a scientific process as Tłıchǫ should collect and manage their own harvest data.

- **VARY:** ENR and Tłıchǫ Government will continue to work with harvesters to report harvests. Methods will be based on the last 2 years of harvest monitoring in the Tłıchǫ communities. A community-based program will be developed in the 2010/11 season.

**Recommendation #41:** The Board recommends that ENR and Tłıchǫ Government reporting on monitoring results to the WRRB and the general public a minimum of three times per year in April, September, and December.

- **ACCEPT**

## **2013 & 2015**

**Recommendation #12-2013/2015:** The Board recommends that recommendations #28 to 41 from 2010, as varied by ENR and TG, related to caribou monitoring remain in place.

- **ACCEPT**

## **2016**

**Recommendation #5B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG conduct TK research about stress and impacts on ɛkwǫ and people related to collars and aircraft over-flights by September 2017, which should be considered in determining number of collars deployed in 2018 and beyond.

- **VARY:** TG strongly agrees that TK studies are needed; however, TG wants to combine Recommendations #2B, 3B, 5B, 15B and 16B into a comprehensive TK study. The Tłchq view TK as an all-encompassing knowledge and believe it is more useful to combine the topics to understand the larger relationship, instead of focusing on single subjects. TK research, conducted by Tłchq Research and Training Institute, is most often directed at and focused on subjects that the elders believe need attention. The all-encompassing TK study, TG proposes, will touch on subjects recommended by the board, however, we will expand the subject area depending the elder's direction. Depending on funding, we are aiming to finish this project by September 2018.

**Recommendation #6B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that ENR determine whether reconnaissance surveys should be conducted during non-photo survey years with renewable resource boards, Aboriginal governments and other affected organizations in the NWT and Nunavut prior to conducting the next reconnaissance survey in June 2017.

- **VARY:** ENR suggests that the Barren Ground Caribou Technical Working Group (BGCTWG) (of which the WRRB is a member) will review the value of reconnaissance surveys over the calving grounds during winter 2016-2017, in conjunction with review of other caribou monitoring as in recommendation 8B.

**Recommendation #8B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG and ENR work with the BGCTWG to prioritize biological monitoring indicators in order of need for effective management and develop thresholds under which management actions can be taken and evaluated. Additionally, TG and ENR should work with the BGCTWG to outline the trade-off between concerns about effects on ʔekwò and the collection of statistically credible information for both the number of collars and over-flights on the calving grounds. Implementation of this recommendation should be completed by no later than the end of March 2017.

- **VARY:** ENR and TG suggest that current monitoring of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds will be reviewed with the BGCTWG during winter 2016-2017 to assess priorities for monitoring, particularly if budget constraints limit resources. Linkage to management actions can also be discussed with the BGCTWG. ENR notes that the joint TG-ENR management proposal includes notes on recent and desired levels of key indicators like cow survival rate, spring calf:cow ratios and pregnancy rates. ENR also notes that management actions to date have been take on the basis of a suite of factors and indicators, including herd size and trend, and future management actions would likewise need to consider a suite of factors and indicators. ENR is willing to explore linkages between monitoring indicators and management actions as proposed by WRRB.

## **2019**

**Recommendation #9-2019 (Sahti Ekwò): Adaptive Management Framework:** WRRB, TG and GNWT to collaborate to develop a herd-specific adaptive management framework with the thresholds linked to specific management actions by January 2020.

- **VARY:** Adaptive Management Framework: WRRB, TG and GNWT to collaborate to develop a herd-specific adaptive management framework with the thresholds linked to



specific management actions by January 2020, with the WRRB taking a lead role. The framework will take into consideration existing management plans and decisions and recommendations from boards and governments.

**Recommendation #11-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò): Pregnancy Monitoring:** To better understand the health of the Sahtì ekwò herd, GNWT and TG should implement Sahtì ekwò pregnancy monitoring through fecal pellet collection in the winter months, starting January 2020. Methodology for this program should include community-based sampling.

- **VARY:** Pregnancy Monitoring: To better understand the health of the Sahtì ekwò herd, GNWT and TG should continue to explore Sahtì ekwò pregnancy monitoring through fecal pellet collection in the winter months, starting in March 2020 during a late-winter composition survey by helicopter. Methodology for this program may include community-based sampling.

**Recommendation #12-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò): Reconnaissance Surveys:** In an effort to leave the ʔekwò alone, and only cause disturbance that is necessary, GNWT should cease the annual reconnaissance survey for Sahtì ekwò.

- **ACCEPT**

**Recommendation #13-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò): Collars:** To have a better understanding of herd distribution, movements, and switching, GNWT should increase the number of collars on the Sahtì ekwò herd from 50 to 70. Additional analysis gathered from the collars should be provided to the WRRB from GNWT annually including but not limited to:

- 1) Dispersal at calving in relation to historic data;
- 2) Timing of calving in relation to historic data;
- 3) Calf:cow ratios; and,
- 4) Rates of herd switching and rutting locations.

- **VARY:** Collars: To have a better understanding of herd distribution, movements, and switching, GNWT should increase the number of collars on the Sahtì ekwò herd from 50 to 70 (50 cows and 20 bulls). ENR Reports that include analyses based on collar data will be provided to the WRRB when completed.

**Recommendation #14-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò): Collars:** Relative to the views of elders and to clarify what analyses require a larger sample size, TG and GNWT should present a detailed rationale for the collar increase to the WRRB. This will be completed using the collars on an annual basis as part of adaptive management.

- **VARY:** Collars: Relative to the views of elders and to clarify what analyses require a larger sample size, TG and GNWT should present a detailed rationale for the collar increase to the WRRB.

**Recommendation #15-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò): Climate Change:** To collect on-the-ground climate change observations, TG's Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è program should be expanded to the post-calving

and summer ranges of Sahti ekwò by October 1, 2019. Results of the monitoring program should be designed to feed into an adaptive management framework.

- **VARY:** Climate Change: To collect on-the-ground climate change observations, TG's Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è program should be expanded to the post-calving and summer ranges of Sahti ekwò, with a start date of Summer 2020. Results of the monitoring program should be designed to feed into an adaptive management framework.

**Recommendation #16-2019 (Sahti Ekwò): Tìchq Research & Monitoring Program:** To ensure that both ʔekwò and ʔekwò habitat monitoring and realistic harvesting numbers are recorded in a culturally appropriate manner, the Tìchq Research and Monitoring Program should be implemented by TG, starting in September 2019 (See Appendix I).

- **VARY:** Tìchq Research & Monitoring Program: To ensure that both ʔekwò and ʔekwò habitat monitoring and realistic harvesting numbers are recorded in a culturally appropriate manner, Tìchq Government will revisit the original 2007 report by A. Legat titled "Tìchq Research and Monitoring Program" for the purpose of determining whether aspects of it not already implemented might be useful.

## 2022

**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.

- **VARY:** The GNWT will 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.

**WRRB Recommendation #2-2022 (Sahti Ekwò)** – TG and GNWT will come prepared to attend 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.

- **VARY:** 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 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.

**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.

- **ACCEPT**

## **APPENDIX B: WRRB Land Use and Habitat Recommendations, 2010 to 2022, and TG & GNWT Responses**

Section 12.5.11 of the Tłıchǰ Agreement states that “each Party with power under its laws to implement a recommendation of the WRRB made under 12.5.5, 12.5.6, 12.5.7, 13.4.1 or 14.4.1 shall accept, reject, or vary such recommendation. In making its decision, each Party shall consult with any other Party or body with power to manage any aspect of the recommendation. Where a Party rejects or varies any recommendation received from the Board, it shall give its decision in writing, with reasons, to the Board and to the other Parties, and shall give public notice of that decision”.

### **2010**

**Recommendation #47:** The Board recommends ENR continue discussions with the Government of Nunavut for identifying opportunities for calving ground protection.

- **ACCEPT**

**Recommendation #48:** 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.

- **VARY:** This can be tied into the long-term management plan.

Discussion will be needed to take place with INAC and Nunavut.

**Recommendation #49:** The Board recommends Tłıchǰ Government work towards development and implementation of a land use plan for Wek’èezhì, including the consideration of thresholds for industrial land use.

- **REJECT:** As per chapter 22.5 of the Agreement, it is the responsibility of Canada or GNWT to develop and implement a land use plan for Wek’èezhì.

**Recommendation #50:** The Board recommends that ENR and INAC monitor landscape changes, including fires and industrial exploration and development, to assess potential impacts to caribou habitat.

- **VARY (ENR):** ENR has carried out some cumulative effects modeling to assess effects to date of diamond mines on the Bathurst herd, and will continue to build on this modeling.

ENR will continue to provide an annual report to the WRRB and Tłıchǰ Government on fire activity. ENR expects a number of research projects investigating the impact of fires on caribou habitat to be completed in 2012 and will provide an annual progress report to the WRRB and Tłıchǰ Government.

ENR will continue to explore new ways to monitor landscape change driven by industrial exploration and development with our partners (e.g., INAC).

**Recommendation #51:** The Board recommends that ENR and Tłıchq Government assess the need for forest fire control in areas of important caribou habitat.

- **ACCEPT**

## **2013 & 2015**

**Recommendation #15-2013/2015:** 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.

- **ACCEPT**

## **2016**

**Recommendation #9B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG refine and implement Tłıchq Land Use Plan Directives, under Chapter 6 related to ɛkwò, land use and cumulative effects by March 2018.

- **VARY:** While land use planning in Wek'èezhìi is a matter beyond the jurisdiction of the WRRB, TG acknowledges this suggestion and advises the board that it intends to refine and implement the Tłıchq Wenek'e (Tłıchq LUP) directives related to caribou.

**Recommendation #10B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG and ENR initiate, develop and implement a land use plan for Wek'èezhìi by March 2019.

- **VARY:** ENR suggests that the GNWT, through the Department of Lands will work collaboratively with the Tłıchq Government, federal government, other Aboriginal Government Organizations and planning partners to initiate, develop, and implement a government-led approach to land use planning for public lands in Wek'èezhìi, consistent with 22.5.1 of the Tłıchq Agreement. The GNWT has initiated the development of a Terms of Reference for the planning process, however, the development and implementation of a successful Wek'èezhìi Land Use Plan will take longer than 2019. Further, while GNWT is supportive of this work, we are of the opinion that it goes beyond the authority of the WRRB and should therefore be a “suggestion” rather than a “recommendation” of the Board.

TG observes that the WRRB does not have jurisdiction over land use planning but agrees with the recommendation that TG and GNWT along with the federal government initiate, develop and implement a land use plan for Wek'èezhìi. TG is of the view that the development and implementation of this land use plan may take longer than 2019.

**Recommendation #11B-2016:** The WRRB recommends TG and ENR develop criteria under which Conservation Areas in the NWT's *Wildlife Act* will be used to protect key ɛkwò habitat by March 2018.

- **VARY:** ENR suggests that TG, ENR and partners, through the Bathurst Range Planning Process, develop criteria to determine when to protect key ɛkwò habitat by March 2018.

ENR notes that the Bathurst range plan, expected to be complete by March 2018, will include recommendations on mechanisms for identifying and protecting key Ɂekwò habitat, and will investigate the applicability of range of tools to do so, including the potential application of Conservation Areas. Until such time as this assessment is complete, it is premature to assume that the Conservation Areas in the *Wildlife Act* will be the best tool to achieve protection objectives. For example, given the extensive process and consultation requirements for developing regulations to establish a Conservation Area, come other tool may be preferable for meeting protection objectives in a more timely or flexible manner. ENR commits to ensuring that the Conservation Area approach will be considered alongside other potential tools in development of the recommendations coming out of the Bathurst Range Plan. The assessment of Conservation Areas and other potential tools for protecting caribou habitat via the Bathurst Range Planning Process should help define approaches that may be applicable to ranges of other herds, including the Bluenose-East.

**Recommendation #12B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG and ENR develop criteria to protect Ɂekwò water crossings from exploration and development activities in the NWT. The criteria should be developed by March 2018 and included in the Tłıchǝ and Wek'èezhì Land Use Plans.

- **ACCEPT**

**Recommendation #13B-2016:** The WRRB recommends TG and ENR investigate and report to the WRRB and other stakeholders on the potential use of offsets for Ɂekwò recovery to compensate for losses caused by exploration and development activities by March 2018. A set of criteria should be developed to assess the effectiveness of each type of offset as it is investigated.

- **ACCEPT**

**Recommendation #14B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG and ENR complete and implement a fire management plan with criteria identifying under which the key Ɂekwò habitat is defined as a value-at-risk by March 2018.

- **VARY:** TG and ENR realize there is a general concern from the communities about fire management and its impact to the caribou. ENR does identify some Ɂekwò habitat as a value at risk in its Fire Management Policy and Strategy, however not all important Ɂekwò habitat has been identified for this purpose. ENR and TG see this recommendation as an opportunity to involve community members in identifying important Ɂekwò habitat, and to explaining how fire management decisions are made and how wildland fires play a crucial role in the boreal ecosystem. The GNWT is guided by the Fire Management Policy which balances the natural role of wildland fire with the protection of values important to residents of the NWT. When responding to a wildland fire the GNWT's primary objective is the protection of life and property of which communities are the highest value. The reality is that the GNWT is limited in its ability to control all fires on our vast landscape and the total exclusion of wildland fire would not be ecologically healthy for the environment or wildlife. While Ɂekwò habitat is identified as a value at risk, it is lower in priority than the protection of life and property.

**Recommendation #15B-2016:** The WRRB recommends TG conduct a TK monitoring project with elders to document how climate conditions have affected preferred summer forage and impacted ʔekwò fitness by September 2018.

- **VARY:** TG strongly agrees that TK studies are needed; however, TG wants to combine Recommendations #2B, 3B, 5B, 15B and 16B into a comprehensive TK study. The Tłchq view TK as an all-encompassing knowledge and believe it is more useful to combine the topics to understand the larger relationship, instead of focusing on single subjects. TK research, conducted by Tłchq Research and Training Institute, is most often directed at and focused on subjects that the elders believe need attention. The all-encompassing TK study, TG proposes, will touch on subjects recommended by the board, however, we will expand the subject area depending the elder's direction. Depending on funding, we are aiming to finish this project by September 2018.

**Recommendation #16B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG conduct TK monitoring to assess the quality and quantity of winter forage by September 2018.

- **VARY:** TG strongly agrees that TK studies are needed; however, TG wants to combine Recommendations #2B, 3B, 5B, 15B and 16B into a comprehensive TK study. The Tłchq view TK as an all-encompassing knowledge and believe it is more useful to combine the topics to understand the larger relationship, instead of focusing on single subjects. TK research, conducted by Tłchq Research and Training Institute, is most often directed at and focused on subjects that the elders believe need attention. The all-encompassing TK study, TG proposes, will touch on subjects recommended by the board, however, we will expand the subject area depending the elder's direction. Depending on funding, we are aiming to finish this project by September 2018.

**Recommendation #17B-2016:** The WRRB recommends that TG and ENR work with the BGCTWG to develop monitoring thresholds for climate indicators by March 2017.

- **VARY:** ENR and TG are willing to review with the BGCTWG annual information on climate indicators and discuss thresholds for these indicators relevant to caribou. ENR and TG would support research that links climate indicators to caribou demography; at this point linkage between climate indicators and caribou population trend is not well established. ENR would request clarification of what WRRB is proposing on thresholds for climate indicators. ENR notes that management actions to date for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds have been made based on a suite of criteria and indicators, and evidence provided by various parties at board hearings.

## **2019**

**Recommendation #6-2019 (Sahtì Ekwò): High Priority Habitat Identification:** To work towards protecting Sahtì ekwò habitat, TG should work with communities to identify high priority habitat for protection. High priority habitat should include habitat used by Sahtì ekwò at low population densities. Once identified, the high priority habitat should be shared with the WRRB.

- **ACCEPT**

**Recommendation #7-2019 (Sahti Ekwò): Legal Protections:** Following identification of high priority habitat for Sahti ekwò, and to ensure this habitat remains intact, legally enforceable habitat protection measures should be implemented by GNWT under the *Wildlife Act* or *Species at Risk Act (NWT)*.

In the interim, Mobile Caribou Conservation Measures should be implemented by GNWT and TG by September 2020.

- **VARY:** Legal Protections: Following identification of high priority habitat for Sahti Ekwò, and to ensure this habitat remains intact, legally enforceable habitat protection measures should be explored by GNWT under the *Wildlife Act* or *Species at Risk Act (NWT)*. In addition, GNWT will explore a pilot project to test Mobile Caribou Conservation Measures.

## **2022**

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

- **ACCEPT**