



February 6, 2019

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**Re: Section 12.5.6 of the Tłıchq Agreement – WRRB Predator Management Recommendations**

Dear Minister McLeod & Grand Chief Mackenzie:

**Background:**

The *Kokèti Ekwò* (Bathurst caribou) and *Sahtì Ekwò* (Bluenose-East caribou) herds are both in a precipitous decline. The decline of the *kokèti ekwò* herd was first documented in 1996 when the population was estimated at 349,000 animals, down from 420,000 in 1986. Management actions to date have failed to halt the decline and the herd's population was estimated at 8,200 animals in 2018. The decline of the *sahtì ekwò* herd was first documented in 2013 when the herd's population was estimated at 68,000 animals, down from 121,000 in 2010. In 2018, the herd's population was estimated at 19,000 animals.

Range management, harvest restrictions and intensive study are being implemented or are already occurring in Wek'èezhì for both herds. Previous joint management proposals for the *kokèti ekwò* herd by the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (ENR), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Tłıchq Government (TG) resulted in the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) holding public hearings in 2010 and again in 2016. A public hearing was also held to address management proposals for the *sahtì ekwò* herd in 2016.

On January 14 and January 22, 2019 respectively, the WRRB received joint management proposals for the *sahtì ekwò* and *kokèti ekwò* herds. These management proposals propose a number of actions. However, despite WRRB recommendations for the implementation of predator control dating as far back as 2010, neither of the current management proposals includes a plan for predator management in either the *sahtì ekwò* or *kokèti ekwò* ranges. Instead your governments have indicated their intention to address the control of predators, more specifically *Dìga* (wolves), in a separate joint management proposal later in the spring of 2019.

**The Issue:**

The situation for both of these herds is dire. Analysis of the joint management proposals by the Board and its advisors indicates an immediate need for action to reduce predation on the herds. During its 2016 public hearings and most recently in the TG-ENR *Ekwò* (barren-ground caribou) consultation tours, conducted on January 21-23, 2019, the WRRB has heard from the community members that *dìga* are continuing to put pressure on *ekwò* populations. Community members would like to see action taken now. The Board agrees.

**The Authority for WRRB Recommendations:**

Section 12.5.6 of the Tłı̨chǫ Agreement states:

*The Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board may, without waiting for a proposal from a Party, make the following recommendations or determinations, after consulting with any Party or body with powers to manage any aspect of the subject matter of its recommendation or determination:*

- (a) *Recommend actions for management of harvesting in Wek'èezhì, including*
  - (i) *A total allowable harvest level for any population or stock of fish,*
  - (ii) *Harvest quotas for wildlife or limits as to location, methods, or seasons of harvesting wildlife, or*
  - (iii) *The preparation of a wildlife management plan; ...*

The WRRB has chosen not to wait for ENR and TG to submit their predator management proposal to the Board later this spring. The 20% rate of annual decline of the *kokèti ekwò* and *sahtì ekwò* herds is in the Board's opinion so serious that waiting any longer to act will make recovery of the herds even more difficult. The Board is convinced that early action is essential.

In consideration of the updated 2018 *sahtì ekwò* and *kokèti ekwò* herd estimates and recent consultations with Tłı̨chǫ communities the WRRB makes the recommendations set out below to GNWT and the TG:

**Recommendation #1-2019 (Predator):** The WRRB supports continuing the ENR's *dìga* harvest incentive program and the TG's Community Based *Dìga* Harvesting Project as an education tool.

**Recommendation #2-2019 (Predator):** The WRRB recommends that *dìga* monitoring be undertaken so that population estimates, or indexes are generated. In addition, as much information as possible, including condition, diet, and reproductive status, should be collected from each harvested *dìga*.

**Recommendation #3-2019 (Predator):** The WRRB recommends that *dìga* management be undertaken in Wek'èezhì. TG and ENR should review the "*Wolf Technical Feasibility Assessment: Options for Managing Wolves on the Range of the Bathurst Barren-ground Caribou Herd*" submitted in November 2017 to determine the most effective, humane and cost-efficient methods that would have the least impact and disturbance on the *ekwò* herds themselves.

**Recommendation #4-2019 (Predator):** The WRRB recommends that *dìga* management should be closely monitored for effectiveness of halting or slowing the decline of the *sahtì ekwò* and *kokèti ekwò* herds in order to provide future harvesting opportunities.

**Recommendation #5-2019 (Predator):** The WRRB recommends that the GNWT and TG work with the Government of Nunavut to enact predator management actions on the calving grounds of sahtì ekwò and kokèti ekwò in Nunavut.

**Recommendation #6-2019 (Predator):** The WRRB commits to striking a working group to begin work on a *sahcho* (grizzly bear) biological assessment by June 2019, specifically on the sahtì ekwò and kokèti ekwò herds herd ranges. This working group will include at minimum the GNWT, TG and the Government of Nunavut. WRRB staff recommend that *sahcho* are monitored in order to determine if pressures are increasing on ekwò.

**Recommendation #7-2019 (Predator):** WRRB staff recommend that *golden det'òcho* (golden eagle) are monitored in order to determine if pressures of golden det'òcho are increasing on ekwò. WRRB staff recommends that TG and the GNWT work with the Government of Nunavut to support golden det'òcho monitoring.

In addition, as per Section 12.5.8 of the Tìchq Agreement, the Board requests a response to these recommendations by March 6, 2019.

**Conclusion:**

The WRRB believes that predator management must begin by May 2019 in order to promote recovery of the herds. This action is essential to ensure the potential for a future harvest of sahtì ekwò and kokèti ekwò.

The WRRB will, in accordance with the Tìchq Agreement participate in any consultations on these proposals that the ENR or TG decides to undertake.

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

Sincerely,



Joseph Judas, Chair  
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

Cc Dr. Joe Dragon, Deputy Minister, ENR-GNWT  
Rita Mueller, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, ENR-GNWT  
Bruno Croft, Superintendent, North Slave Region, ENR-GNWT  
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