



January 28, 2011

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Re: Joint Response – Recommendation Report on the Revised Joint Proposal

The Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) acknowledges receipt of the 14 January 2011 joint response to the Board's *Reasons for Decisions Related to a Joint Proposal for the Management of the Bathurst Caribou Herd*. The Board recognizes the importance of the collaborative effort utilized during the consideration and response to its recommendations. The Board also takes note of the commitments made by the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (ENR) and Tł'chǫ Government (TG) in the response and looks forward to regular updates on these commitments.

To ensure that ENR, TG and the WRRB have a common understanding about the recommendations, the Board provides further comment and requests clarification on the following:

- Implementation Plan
The WRRB believes that it is imperative that the implementation plan be completed and implemented as soon as possible as harvesting is already ongoing in Wek'èezhìi.
- Reinstatement of outfitted and resident harvesting within Wek'èezhìi
The Joint Response states that Recommendations 4 and 6 regarding future access to barren-ground caribou harvest within Wek'èezhìi by non-aboriginal harvesters are to be addressed in the "long-term management plan for the Bathurst herd" to be concluded by the end of 2012. The purpose of the Board's recommendations was to ensure there is a balance between the identification of circumstances that warrant limitations on non-aboriginal harvest and those circumstances that allow for those limitations to be lifted. The Board feels that this information will be important to discussions regarding the long term management of the Bathurst herd. Therefore, to provide direction and guidance for the management plan, ENR and TG should make public their position on this matter. Additionally, the WRRB

requests clarification on the timeline for preparation and completion of this management plan and the anticipated process for stakeholder involvement.

- Assessment and revision of management actions

The Joint Response states that Recommendation 46 regarding development of criteria to assess the success or failure of management actions that would indicate when they are to be revised will be addressed in the “long-term management plan for the Bathurst herd” to be concluded by the end of 2012. The purpose of the Board’s recommendation was to ensure that criteria for both the short-term and long-term actions are developed. While management actions, such as land use management, are longer term items which can be addressed in the management plan, shorter term actions, such as evaluation of the harvest monitoring program, should be addressed by the Technical Working Group as soon as possible.

- Harvest ratio of 85 bulls: 15 cows

ENR and TG have chosen a harvest sex ratio of 80 bulls: 20 cows, based on modeling projections that suggest small changes in the harvest ratio would have negligible impacts on the Bathurst herd’s likely trend. The Board understands that the sensitivity of the population models is not high given the variation around many of the population parameters used in the model. In addition, a higher sex ratio leaves a smaller margin between “negligible impacts” and impact. This was taken into account by the Board in recommending a more conservative breakdown of the harvest. It will, therefore, be imperative that ENR and TG take all necessary measures, up to and including closure of all harvest, to not exceed the total cow harvest target for the Bathurst herd.

- No harvester assistance and/or incentives provided to access caribou herds

While the WRRB understands that ENR may be required to provide assistance or incentives as a part of accommodation for limiting harvest of the Bathurst herd, the Board is concerned about shifting harvest pressure from one herd to another without management plans or harvest targets in place. It will, therefore, be imperative that ENR and TG take all necessary measures to monitor caribou harvest in adjacent herds.

- Caribou harvest monitoring actions

TG has committed to implementing the Tłı̨chǫ Knowledge Research and Monitoring Program: Special Project: Using Tłı̨chǫ Knowledge to Monitor Barren Ground Caribou during 2011. The Tłı̨chǫ Knowledge Research and Monitoring Program will document and report on observations and trends observed by caribou harvesters and elders. The WRRB requests clarification that the community based program identified in the response to Recommendation 40 will be developed and implemented under the Tłı̨chǫ Knowledge Research and Monitoring Program or will be a separately managed program.

- Best practices for mitigating effects on caribou

The Joint Response states that Recommendation 48 regarding development of best practices for mitigating effects on caribou during calving and post-calving are to be addressed in the “long-term management plan for the Bathurst herd” to be concluded by the end of 2012. The purpose of the Board’s recommendation was to ensure that land use activities have minimal adverse affect on both caribou and caribou habitat. The Board feels that this information will be important to discussions regarding the long term management of the

Bathurst herd. Therefore, to provide direction and guidance for the management plan, ENR and TG, in discussions with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Nunavut, should begin identifying best practices as soon as possible.

- Land use plan for Wek'èezhìi

TG rejected Recommendation 49 regarding Land Use Planning on the basis that under the Tł'chö Agreement it is the responsibility of Canada or the Government of the Northwest Territories to develop a land use plan for Wek'èezhìi. The Board accepts this clarification but further recommends TG and ENR initiate discussions with Canada regarding land use planning for Wek'èezhìi, including the development of thresholds for industrial activity on barren-ground caribou range.

- Management proposal for wood bison

As per Section 12.5.1 of the Tł'chö Agreement, the Board considers any wildlife management plan as a management proposal. Therefore, the WRRB requests clarification on the timeline for preparation and completion of this management plan and the anticipated process for stakeholder involvement.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at (867) 873-5740 or jsnortland@wrrb.ca.

Sincerely,



J. Grant Pryznyk

Interim Chair

Cc Ernie Campbell, Assistant Deputy Minister, ENR
 Nicole McCutchen, Manager, Wildlife Division, ENR
 Alphonse Apples, A/Grand Chief, TG
 Laura Duncan, Tł'chö Executive Officer, TG
 Bertha Rabesca-Zoe, Legal Counsel, TG