

October 15, 2020

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Via Email

Re: Information Request Round No. 2 – Dìga Revised Joint Management Proposal

On January 31, 2020, Environment & Natural Resources (ENR), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Tłı̨chǫ Government (TG) submitted a joint management proposal, entitled “*Joint Proposal on Management Actions for Wolves (dìga) on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou (ᑭᑭᑭᑭ) Herd Winter Ranges: 2020 – 2025*” (“the Proposal”) outlining proposed management actions for dìga in Wek'èezhìi. The Board established the 2020 Wolf Management Proceeding on March 2, 2020.

On March 9, 2020, after hearing from the GNWT and TG, the WRRB held an emergency meeting and decided to treat the 2020 dìga management actions as a pilot project only, and, as such, approved the proposed 2020 dìga management actions in the Proposal.

Additionally, the Board requested that the GNWT and TG resubmit the dìga management actions proposed for 2021-2024 in the Proposal for a Level 2 review with the inclusion of lessons learned from the implementation of the 2020 management actions as well as a technical assessment and a plain-language summary. On August 25, 2020, GNWT and TG submitted a revised joint management proposal, entitled “*Revised Joint Proposal on Management Actions for Wolves (dìga) on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou (ᑭᑭᑭᑭ) Herd Winter Ranges: 2021 – 2024*”.

As per the WRRB's Rules of Procedure, Participants that would like to issue information requests for Round No.2 to another Party may do so. As such, attached is a list of information requests for TG, ENR, North Slave Metis Alliance, and Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation's response. **Responses must be received by no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 22, 2020.**

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

Sincerely,



Joseph Judas
Chair

Attachment

Cc Hon. Shane Thompson, Minister, ENR-GNWT
Dr. Erin Kelly, Deputy Minister, ENR-GNWT
Brett Elkin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, ENR-GNWT
Grand Chief George Mackenzie
Laura Duncan, Tłıchǫ Executive Officer, TG
Michael Birlea, Manager, Lands Protection and Renewable Resources, TG

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Karin Clark, A/Director, Wildlife
Environment and Natural Resources
Government of the Northwest Territories
Box 1320, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9
Email: Karin_Clark@gov.nt.ca

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Director
Culture & Lands Protection
Tłıchō Government
Box 412, Behchokò, NT X0E 0Y0
Email: TammySteinwand@tlicho.com

Catherine Fauvelle, Conservation Planner
North Slave Métis Alliance
32 Melville Drive, Yellowknife, NT, X1A 0G2
Email: catherine.fauvelle@nsma.net

Glen Guthrie, Director, Wildlife, Lands, and Environment Department
Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation
PO Box 28, Łutsel K'e, NT, X0E 1A0
E: lkdfnlands@gmail.com

Wolf Joint Management Proposal – Information Requests Round No.2

Information Request #1:

Please define the recovery objectives for the Bluenose-East and Bathurst herds in the wolf management program and please describe how continued wolf removal will contribute to those objectives. Please specify whether those objectives are a rate (of survival or wolf removal) or a target herd size in a particular timeframe.

Submitted by: Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories and Tłıchǫ Government

Rationale for IR #1:

1. Section 2 of the Joint Management Proposal states that the proposed management actions are to “slow the herd’s decline and promote recovery for a period of 2 years beginning in July 2019.” It was indicated in the Science Technical Session that adult survival rates for both the Bathurst and Bluenose East herds have improved since 2017. As adult survival has improved it is important for the board to understand how the wolf management program can contribute to herd recovery.
2. The response to First Round IR#9 indicates that environmental factors also affect adult and especially calf survival. Maintaining wolf removal could offset any increases in adult or calf mortality to meet the recovery objectives.

Information Request #2:

Please provide a rationale as to why wolf removal on the summer ranges was not considered given the potential to reduce uncertainties, and increase efficiency, and effectiveness of the overall removal proposal.

Submitted by: Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories and Tłıchǫ Government

Rationale for IR #2:

1. The Pilot project did contribute to joint management proposal by describing in detail the approach to estimating wolf numbers (Ungulate Biomass Indicator) and allocation of the wolf removal to individual caribou herds. The Technical Session did acknowledge uncertainties about the numbers of wolves and the allocation of removed wolves to the individual herds.
2. There are also uncertainties about whether the wolf kill rate is applicable to the summer ranges as well as the winter ranges. There is also uncertainty about if wolves have fidelity to a caribou herd on its summer as well as its winter range. It is not clear whether winter removals will reduce predation on caribou especially caribou calves on the summer range.

3. If the wolf numbers are low and are further reduced during removal, finding wolves on the winter range will become more difficult and expensive.
4. GNWT's response to Information Request #7 noted that den occupancy data collected between 1996 and 2013 was a useful insight into patterns of den use on the Bathurst range. In addition, the Technical wolf feasibility report refers to a large but older database on wolf dens including the Bluenose East summer range.
5. Traditional knowledge about wolves on the summer ranges and traditional practices for removing wolves at their dens sites is available.
6. The proposed monitoring using the collared wolves and/or dens surveys will contribute to reducing the uncertainties about the applicability of the winter removals to reducing predation on the summer range.

Information Request #3:

At what point (benchmarks) would the aerial removal program stop operations due to changing biological indicators in either wolves or caribou?

Submitted by: Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories and Tłıchǵ Government.

Rationale for IR #3:

1. This question was posed during the science technical session, but a definitive answer was not provided. It is important to know when the program will be deemed ineffective, either due to a response in the caribou or wolf populations.
2. Reasons for stopping are the practicality of finding and removing wolves when numbers are extremely low (efficiency and effectiveness indicators) as the intent is not to remove all wolves from the caribou landscape.
3. Other reasons for stopping are when it is not possible to demonstrate that caribou recovery depends on wolf removal or that it is not practical to expect caribou adult survival rates to increase beyond the low 90s%.

Information Request #4:

- a) Please expand on the discussion that occurred at the community meetings in Wekweètì, Gamètì, and Whatì on February 3, 2020; February 5, 2020; and February 25, 2020, respectively.
- b) Was a similar discussion had with the community in Behchokò? If not, then why?

Submitted by: Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board

Parties Responsible: Tłıchǵ Government

Rationale for IR #4:

It is important to the WRRB to know that the public has been sufficiently consulted on the Joint Management Proposal.

Information Request #5:

To help inform a broader perspective on the recovery of the Bathurst caribou herd, please outline the perspectives and/or plans on community-based management actions and monitoring (guardianship) that your organization and community are considering as it may apply to barren-ground caribou and wolves in their traditional use areas.

Submitted by: Tłıchq Government

Parties Responsible: North Slave Métis Alliance

Rationale for IR #5:

In the broader context of adaptive co-management of barren-ground caribou that occur within the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, it is vitally important for Territorial Governments and Indigenous Governments and Organizations (IGOs) to work cooperatively for recovery and long-term conservation of caribou herds. Most recently Tłıchq Government and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) submitted a revised joint management 2021-2025 wolf management actions proposal on wolves to the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB), which is currently being reviewed as a Level 2 proceeding.

During the WRRB's recent science technical session (5 Oct 2020), representatives from Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) and the North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA) contributed to meaningful discussion on the various issues and challenges that may arise through the wolf management actions proposed jointly by Tłıchq Government and the GNWT.

Information Request #6:

To help inform a broader perspective on the recovery of the Bathurst caribou herd, please outline the perspectives and/or plans on community-based management actions and monitoring (guardianship) that your organization and community are considering as it may apply to barren-ground caribou and wolves in their traditional use areas.

Submitted by: Tłıchq Government

Parties Responsible: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Rationale for IR #6:

In the broader context of adaptive co-management of barren-ground caribou that occur within the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, it is vitally important for Territorial Governments and Indigenous Governments and Organizations (IGOs) to work cooperatively for recovery and long-term conservation of caribou herds. Most recently Tłıchq Government and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) submitted a revised joint management 2021-2025 wolf management actions proposal on wolves to the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB), which is currently being reviewed as a Level 2 proceeding.

During the WRRB's recent science technical session (5 Oct 2020), representatives from Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) and the North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA) contributed to meaningful discussion on the various issues and challenges that may arise through the wolf management actions proposed jointly by Tłıchǫ Government and the GNWT.

Information Request #7:

Do the Elders feel that taking 80% of the wolves by hunting from airplane and on the ground could bring the caribou back?

Information Request #8:

During the TK Session on wolf management Elders were asked about balance and right relationship with wolves, caribou, and people. We heard from John Zoe and others that the balance has been disrupted a long time ago, with so many changes that have happened to how people live, hunt, and use the seasons. According to Tłıchǫ Knowledge, in what ways (good or bad) might the removal of wolves have an effect on the "interdependent relationships of all beings"? (Tłıchǫ Research and Training Institute, p.20)

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Tłıchǫ Government

Rationale for IR #7 and 8:

During the WRRB Traditional Knowledge Technical Session - 2020 Wolf Management Proceeding on Oct 13th, we were surprised that the participating Elders did not seem to be briefed on the proposed Wolf Management Plan (2021-2024). The proposed Wolf Management Plan itself was not even discussed. Topics focused on broad relationships between wolves and caribou and resulting conversations failed to address the broader purpose of the meeting. These discussions seemed to be preliminary to the proposed project, and largely contrasted the Science Technical Session on October 5th, where discussions seemed to focus more on the execution of the project itself.

Information Request #9:

Were similar concepts of Tłıchǫ, Dene, and Chipewyan cosmology compared with the concepts of humanness and welfare as they have been used to inform the Wolf Management Plan for 2021-2024? What other concepts and values relating to the non-utilitarian killing of animals exist from Tłıchǫ, Dene, and Chipewyan cosmology? In other words, where is the traditional knowledge related to ethics on the non-utilitarian killing of animals to assess the feasibility of the proposed project?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Rationale for IR #9:

The 2017 Feasibility Study incorporates an ethical argument built around the twin western concepts of humaneness and welfare, against which the various options for wolf management are assessed; these outcomes inform the Wolf Management Plan for 2021-2024. We expected, given that this is a joint proposal, the ethical framework for the proposed plan would draw directly from traditional knowledge and Indigenous laws.

Information Request #10:

What is the theory behind the practice of wolf removal as a support in caribou recovery? Does the proposed wolf cull stem from social concerns, or conventional wildlife practices in the normal course of ENR's caribou management? What forms of social support has the proposed wolf cull already achieved?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories and Tłıchǫ Government

Information Request #11:

What is the total projected cost of the proposal?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #12:

Has a cost benefit analysis from a social and cultural standpoint been performed on the proposal or its alternatives?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #13:

In the broader context of caribou management, how are cumulative impacts (e.g., including human activity) being considered? How are these being incorporated into the proposed Project?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #14:

What alternative forms of management are being implemented in addition to wolf culling for population recovery? What evidence is there that wolves contribute to significant caribou

mortality rates compared to other causes of mortality?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #15:

What other predator-prey relationships have you identified other than wolf-caribou? How do these other predator-prey interactions influence the wolf-caribou relationship?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #16:

What biological/experimental data are there linking wolf culls to caribou numbers? What evidence is there that the statistical relationships in simulated models reflect biological ones?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #17:

The wolf feasibility assessment in 2017 indicated risks that include limited information about wolf numbers (as abundance is difficult to estimate aerially), wolf predation rates, and overlapping Bathurst ranges with neighbouring herds. How are these risks being considered/mitigated in this proposal?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories

Information Request #18:

Recent literature by Bongelli et al. (2020), Harding et al., (2020), Proulx (2017) and others provide research that suggest that the removal of wolves for caribou recovery is unnecessary/ineffectual. How will ENR and TG address the possibility that a wolf cull may be an unnecessary action?

Submitted by: Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation

Parties Responsible: Government of the Northwest Territories