



Yellowknives Dene First Nation Final Submission

Joint Management Proposal for BNE Caribou Herd

"The Caribou saved us without them we will not survive." Fred Sangris

Yellowknives Dene First Nations
Department of Land and Environment

Contents

Introduction	1
Harvest Management.....	1
Predation	2
Education, Monitoring and Research	2
General Comments.....	3
Management Collaboration.....	3
Conclusion	3

Introduction

These comments are presented in the four (4) proposed sections. Section 1 speaks to harvest; Section 2: Predation; Section 3: Education, Monitoring and Research; Section 4 gives general comments and Section 5: the conclusion

Harvest Management

1. The Proposal intends to restrict the total amount of harvested BNE to 300 bulls per year. It provides a further breakdown in percentages and corresponding absolute numbers the amount of BNE bulls each indigenous group with the right to harvest will be accorded. In the case of the Akaitcho Territory, this absolute figure is six (6) bulls. YKDFN is not in agreement with the harvest quota and the assignment of six (6) bulls per year for the entire Akaitcho Territory. We do acknowledge the dire reality of caribou decline and that certain concessions are required but stand resolute in the belief that indigenous rights to harvest, cannot and should not be placed in such absolute terms. We operate within the spirit of Treaty 8 which guarantees our aboriginal rights including the right to harvest. Additionally, we also operate within the spirit of the peace treaty between our communities in the 1800's which ensured we could hunt and trap in one another's territories unhindered.
2. Range maps of both the BNE and the Bathurst caribou ranges identify overlaps. From the proposal, it is unclear how the management plan will treat with this. Specifically, in relation to the impact of the overlap on harvesting with due consideration that harvesters do not generally make distinctions by herd particularly on the fringe of management zone where herd range overlap is most likely to occur. A lack of due consideration in this regard could serve to undermine the objective of the plan and is potentially a source of conflict among harvesting groups. TG and ENR need to outline within the management plan how exactly they will deal with the enforcement to ensure adherence. YKDFN is also unsure as to whether ENR staff that will perform stewardship duties and contingency checks can distinguish the among caribou herds by appearance. This is a critical point and

due consideration should be given to ensuring capacity building in the even they cannot already do so.

Predation

The continuous and iterative concentration primarily on the predatory role of wolves in the rapid decline of caribou is too narrow and attributing the greatest share of responsibility to the wolf (in our estimation) without much justification. Notwithstanding, we do not discount their role and recommend the collaring of wolves. This will provide a vital dataset that can be matched against existing and any future collared caribou data of range and calving grounds. This can then be cross referenced against traditional. Overlaps and/or interconnectivity of data could be pivotal in further understanding how wolves and caribou interact and could have significant implications for policy.

We believe that further analysis of how caribou behaviour is affected by development and mines. We have a serious problem which necessitates collaborative effort between First Nations and the GNWT in getting to the root cause of the steady and rapid decline in caribou population by looking across the board at all potential causes. This requires convergent collaborative research between indigenous scientific knowledge and western science.

Education. Monitoring and Research

We believe that science is important, but it is not unto itself a panacea. It must be supplemented and complimented, by the knowledge that resides with the people of the land. The chiefs of the YKDFN, are not in favor of monitoring with collars. This is not how caribou monitoring has been done by Dene peoples. The best way to understand the caribou is right there on the land. You must interact with them. You must watch them daily; watch what they eat; watch what they do. Aboriginal people learn by direct observation. We don't learn about wildlife remotely. We learn by being in the field, by being with wildlife all the time.

General Comments

Management Collaboration

Of much concern is the collaboration between the ENR and TG and submission to the WRRB on this BNE management plan and the Bathurst herd management plan without the input of YKDFN and other indigenous communities. This does not give us the opportunity to engage at the same level as the TG and ENR. This is particularly disturbing with the Bathurst herd which ranges primarily in the traditional territory of the YKDFN.

GNWT and TG should understand the current state of the YKDFN and holistically of the Akaitcho territory. We are in the midst of negotiating our land claim and any management plan should include us, as it may have long-term implications which may hamper or cross-cut our ability to implement management plans of our own when the claim is settled. We should not be placed at a disadvantage because we do not have a settled land claim. We do not want a situation where there are overlapping or conflicting plans.

We are mindful of the long-term implications this management plan might have on our ability to implement management plans of our own when we eventually settle our land claim and our status of treaty members. We ask the board to give due consideration to this.

Conclusion

YKDFN would like to thank the Board and Board staff for their time and attention to these matters