

Creeping towards consensus

Caribou workshop participants emerge with united message

by Miranda Scotland
Northern News Services
Deline/Fort Franklin

Aboriginal groups have reached consensus on how they would like the GNWT to handle setting Bluenose-East caribou harvest limits.

Participants of a three-day workshop on caribou management emerged with a united message for Environment Minister Michael Miltenberger.

Deborah Simmons, director of the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board, said in light of the meeting, a letter would be drafted and sent to the minister detailing seven key points. She would not elaborate on specifics at this time.

"The perspective (from the meeting) is there is not an emergency with the Bluenose-East herd," said Simmons.

"At the same time, it's clear there will need to be some hard work done to prepare for the next harvest season so there's a real sense of fairness in how the harvest is being shared."

The Sahtu Renewable Resources Board hosted the workshops in Deline Jan. 27 to 29.

Representatives from all Sahtu communities, as well as Inuvik, Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk, Kugluktuk, the Tlicho Government, and various wildlife management authorities attended the meetings.

Participants in the workshop strongly support the Bluenose caribou management plan drafted by the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM), said Simmons.

The document outlines six key areas of action: land use, education and communication,



photo courtesy of Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Participants in a three-day caribou workshop don't believe there is an emergency with the Bluenose-East caribou, but acknowledge there needs to be a return to traditional, sustainable ways of hunting.

predator control, harvest management, long-term management and action planning and environmental monitoring.

The advisory committee recommends a harvest number of 2,800 Bluenose-East caribou. The management plan is currently awaiting ministerial approval.

Meanwhile, the GNWT's emergency management actions for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds officially took effect last week. Harvesting from the Bathurst herd has been suspended, except for a maximum of 15

bulls taken for ceremonial reasons, while a limited harvest of 1,800 animals is in effect for the Bluenose-East herd.

The actions will be revisited once the results from this year's spring photographic survey on the herds are ready.

The Bluenose-East herd's population was estimated at more than 100,000 in 2010 but three years later it had declined to about 68,000 animals, surveys showed.

A reconnaissance survey of the herd's calving ground, conducted in June 2014, suggested Bluenose-East numbers

have continued to decline by approximately 30 per cent.

'We need to talk about us as hunters'

While participants did not think the stated decline in the Bluenose-East population indicates an emergency, there was consensus that harvesters must not allow the herd to get to the same point as the Bathurst and that preventative action must be taken now.

The suspended harvest for the Bathurst herd puts a lot of pressure on the Bluenose-East caribou, said Deline First

Nation Chief Leonard Kenny.

"We're here today because of the caribou," said Kenny during a break in the meetings Jan. 29. "I think we have to keep them around for a long time. It's up to us as people. We always talk about the caribou but no we need to talk about us as hunters. We need to work together."

There was a lot of discussion during the meeting about ways to protect the Bluenose-East herd from further population decline, said Kenny.

Actions have to be taken to manage caribou predators, participants said. Wolves are especially a problem, said Kenny, adding there have recently been reports of about 50 across the lake from Deline.

"We have to start hunting like our ancestors."

Chief Leonard Kenny

For instance, Frank Pokiak of Tuktoyaktuk spoke about how his community has dealt with the decline in caribou in their area. He detailed how they distribute hunting tags, which Kenny found particularly helpful.

"Here, it's very hard for my elders to accept, they don't like the word 'tags' and stuff like that. My elders, I cannot tell them as the chief not to shoot caribou or not to harvest certain caribou because in their minds all their lives they've lived off the land, they eat country food," he said.

"So there's going to be tough decisions to make."

The messages expressed during the workshop will be useful in the action planning process for the

Bluenose herds, which will be carried out by the ACCWM, said Simmons.

A lot of what the organization heard a few years ago when it held community consultations on the Bluenose management plan was echoed throughout the three days.

"It was quite clear that everyone in the room shared a common concern for the health and well being of the caribou for present and future generations.

"There was a strong understanding that communities and regions need to develop their approaches to conservation and at the same time need to work with other regions so everyone is working together toward that common goal of conservation for the herds."

"Today, with the big machines we have we can go a long ways overnight hunt and bring back 10 caribou like nothing, not like before. Before they used dog teams and they took about two weeks to go hunting and when they come back they only had three or four caribou," said Kenny.

"We have to start hunting like our ancestors by taking only what you need and respecting wildlife."

The workshop, he continued, also provided an opportunity for communities to learn from each other.

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GOVERNMENT FINALIZES BATHURST, BLUENOSE-EAST MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Bathurst herd:

- Establish a mobile core conservation area around collared Bathurst caribou where no harvesting is permitted and update the location of the area weekly. The information will be distributed to the communities and posted on the Environmental and Natural Resources website.
- Limited harvest of up to 15 bulls from the Bathurst herd for pre-approved community ceremonial purposes only.

Bluenose-East herd:

- Limited harvest of 1,800 animals with an 80 per cent bull harvest. Total allocation of harvest to be determined.
- Authorizations required for harvest in wildlife management units R/BC/01, R/BC/02, R/BC/03 and D.
- Increased enforcement of the harvest as recommended by the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management.



Gwich'in Tribal Council

REVISED LAND MANAGEMENT CONTROL GUIDELINES AND FEE SCHEDULE

2015/2016

The Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) will be revising its Land Management and Control Guidelines and Fee Schedule. The Guidelines describe how the GTC administers access to land it owns in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The Guidelines are based on the land use and ownership rights and obligations of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement of 1992. People or Organizations who need to apply for access to, or for the occupation of, Gwich'in owned land will be able to request a copy of the guidelines from the Gwich'in Land and Resources department of the Gwich'in Tribal Council in April 2015.

Among other amendments, there will be an annual increase in certain fees for the 2015/2016 fiscal year in accordance with a factor based on Canada's GNP.

To request a copy of the new Guidelines and Fee schedule, or further information, please contact:

Patrick Tomlinson
Director of Intergovernmental Relations and Land Claim Implementation
Gwich'in Tribal Council
(867) 777-7941
ptomlinson@gwichin.nt.ca

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Gwich'in nan, nakhwek'yuu ts'at gwitr'it tthak nakhwidavee gwiheezaa eenjit*