



Management Planning for the Bluenose Caribou Herds

Representatives of the ʔehdzo Got'Inę Gotsé Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) have been working with six other co-management boards to develop a management plan for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East caribou. This is part of their role as members of the **Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM)**. The management plan is now ready, and was reviewed and approved at a meeting in the fall. This is the last step in a consensus-based process that included three rounds of engagement with 17 communities in six land claim areas over five years.

The management plan describes:

- Principles and goals for taking care of the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East caribou herds
- The need for a plan and the importance of working together
- Current population estimates and trends
- Roles and responsibilities of the wildlife co-management boards and agencies
- Information required to effectively take care of the herds
- How to make management decisions that can impact herds
- A framework for determining what management actions should be taken, and
- How to communicate with communities, harvesters, youth, and others.

There are also two companion documents that support the management plan and provide more details – a **'Scientific Report'**¹ (containing recent research results and trend information) and a **'Community Report'**² (containing information documented during the community engagements).

The **goals** of the plan are to:

- Maintain herds within the known natural range of variation
- Conserve and manage caribou habitat, and
- Ensure that harvesting is respectful and sustainable.

The plan reflects the following **principles**:

The **Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management** was established

to “exchange information, help develop cooperation and consensus and make recommendations regarding wildlife and wildlife habitat issues that cross land claim and treaty boundaries,” and consists of the Chairpersons (or alternate appointees) of:

- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
- Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
- ʔehdzo Got'Inę Gotsé Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
- Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board
- Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board
- Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board, and
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board.

¹ “Technical Report on the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East Barren-Ground Caribou Herds,” (ENR)

² “We have been living with the caribou all our lives,” (ACCWM Working Group)

- Management decisions will respect treaties and land claim agreements and Aboriginal harvesting rights in areas both with and without a land claim agreement
- Management decisions will reflect the wise use of the herds in a sustainable manner
- Adequate habitat (quantity and quality) is fundamental to the welfare of the herds
- Management decisions will be based on the best available information – including science, as well as traditional and local knowledge – and will not be postponed in the absence of complete information
- Effective management requires participation, openness and cooperation among all users and agencies responsible for the stewardship of the herds and their habitat. Shared use requires shared responsibility
- Harvests must be allocated in a manner which respects Aboriginal harvesting rights and the sustainable harvesting limit, if any, of each herd
- The impacts to caribou herds and their habitat must be anticipated and minimized.

There were many different points of view and some sensitive issues that had to be accommodated in the management plan. When it was hard to agree on something, it was included in a “**Hot Topic Box**”. These boxes are a way to explain differing opinions. They also describe how the ACCWM decided to move ahead, even though the issue may not be completely resolved yet.

The management plan provides details on ***how herds will be monitored, how decisions will be made, what actions can be taken, and when actions should be taken***. There are five different types of management actions outlined in the plan, including education, habitat, land use activities, predators and harvest management.

Hot Topic Boxes include the following:

- *Defining Caribou Herds*
- *Exchange or Movement between Caribou Herds*
- *Caribou Collaring*
- *Perspectives on Harvesting and Harvest Monitoring*
- *Predator Control Programs*
- *Priorities for Harvest Allocation*
- *Cow vs. Bull Harvests.*

Management actions are determined in part by herd size, and whether it is increasing or decreasing. Decisions are also influenced by other information from harvesters and scientists.

Now that the plan is approved and signed by all the ACCWM members, the next step will be to develop **Action Plans** for each herd. The Action Plans will lay out annual priorities and provide more details on how management actions will be carried out. Action Plans will be in place for three to five years. The management plan will be reviewed and updated in five years, then every ten years thereafter. The ACCWM will continue to meet annually to share information and make collaborative decisions.



Taking Care of Caribou

The
**CAPE BATHURST, BLUENOSE-WEST,
AND BLUENOSE-EAST BARREN-GROUND
CARIBOU HERDS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife
Management**

November 3, 2014



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“My grandfather says that we were once caribou and caribou were once people. We switched when there was starvation. There are a lot of stories. In the past, not too long ago, some years there was no caribou, no meat.” (Colville Lake)

The **Bluenose Caribou Management Plan Working Group** consists of representatives of:

- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT);
- Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board;
- ʔehdzo Got'ıne Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB));
- Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board;
- Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board;
- Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Association;
- Dehcho First Nations;
- Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board;
- Tłıchq̓ Government;
- Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), GNWT;
- Department of the Environment, Government of Nunavut;
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB); and
- Parks Canada.

“Call all groups together...so we can work together. It need not involve a hundred people but we need to start talking.” (Inuvik)

“It hurts to see less caribou because we need them for so much. We here have caribou as food – we just take what we need. We talk among the community and discuss what’s needed.”(Délîné)

“It would be great to have elders advising decisions on the future of the caribou. We still rely on caribou because our ancestors really survived on it. Our ancestors had travelled all the way to the barren lands to harvest caribou for clothing”. (Behchok̓)

12.0 Signatories to the Plan

Below are the members of the ACCWM and signatories to *Taking Care of Caribou: The Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou Herds Management Plan*. In recognition of the importance of the Bluenose Caribou Herds and their habitat, the decision of one Party not to accept the Management Plan will not preclude the remaining Parties from continuing with development and implementation of the plan.



Wildlife Management Advisory Council –NWT (WMAC-NWT)



Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB)



?ehdzo Got'Inę Gots'ę Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB))



Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board (WRRB)

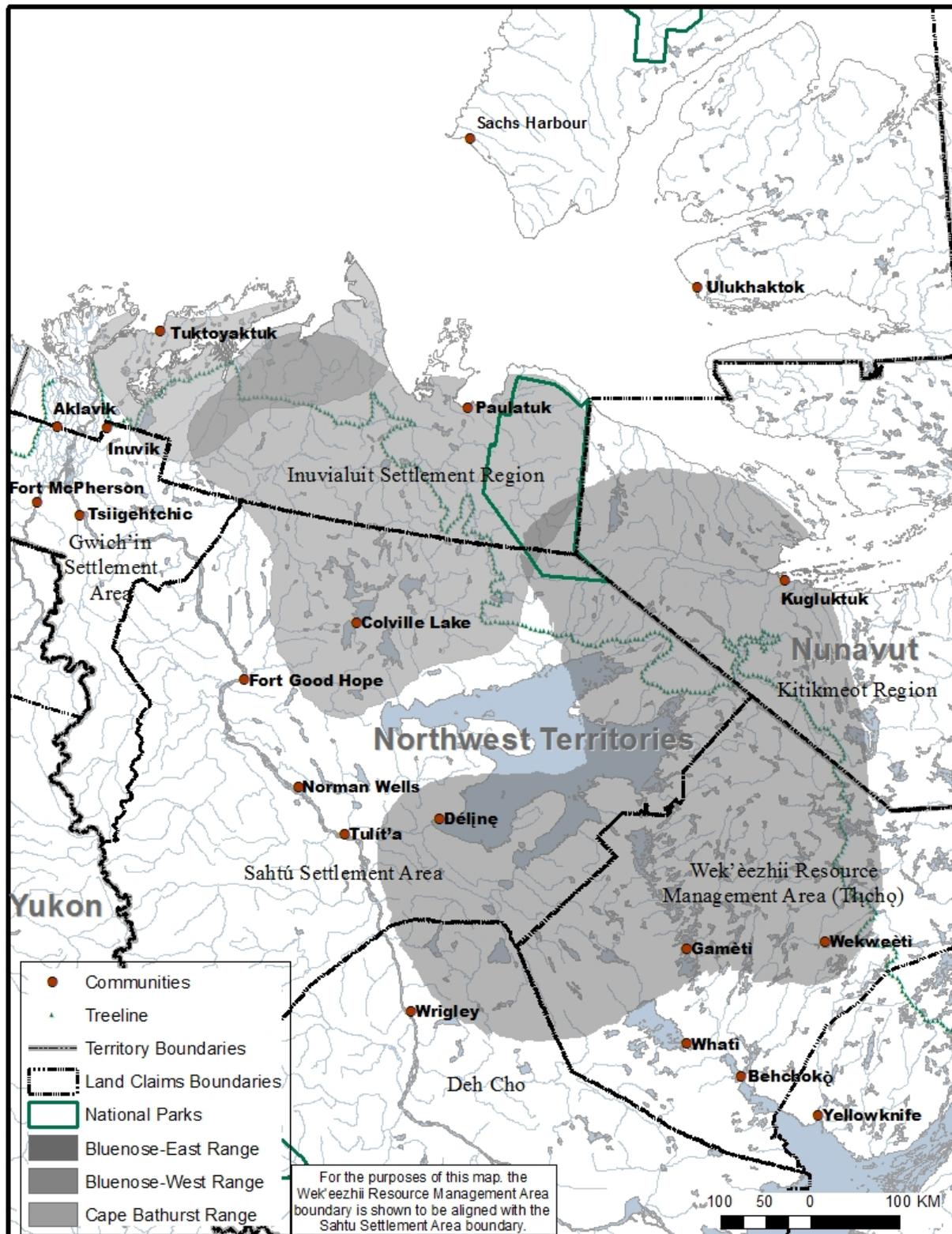


Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB)



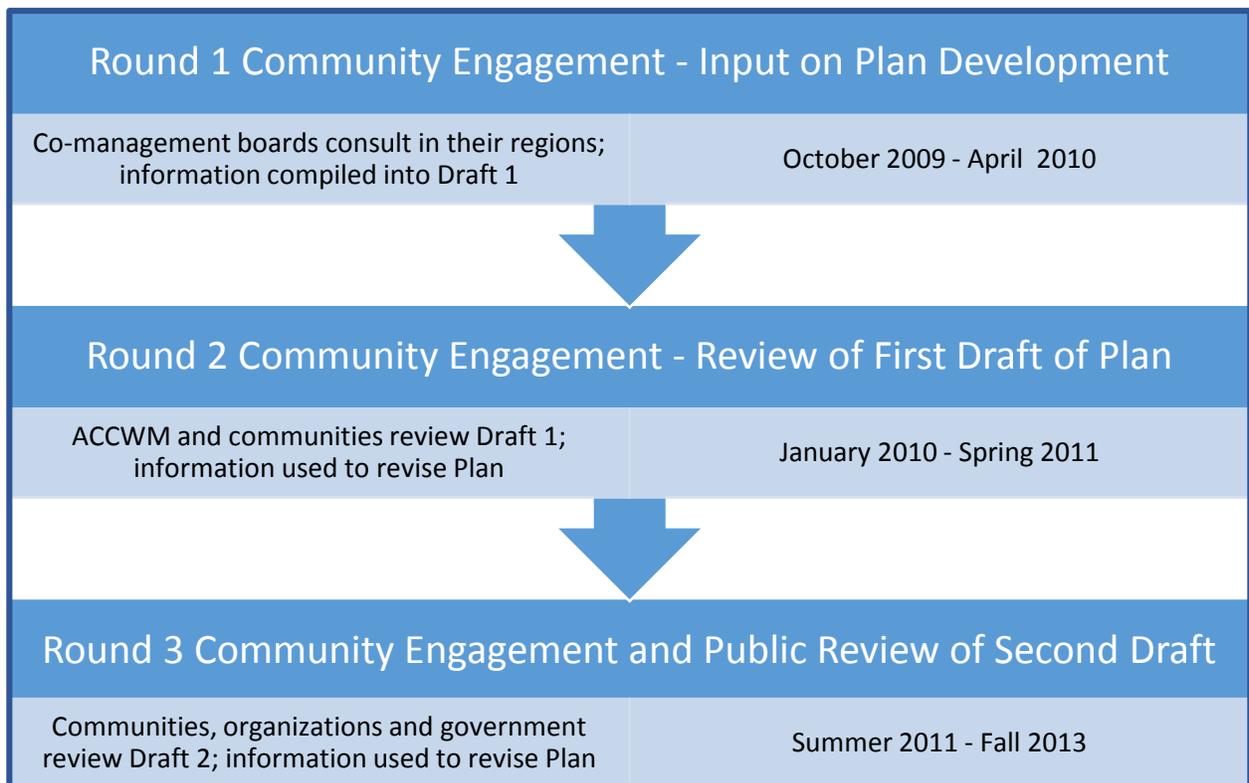
Tuktut Nogait National Park Management Board (TNNPMB)

The Management Plan includes the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West and Bluenose-East caribou herds:

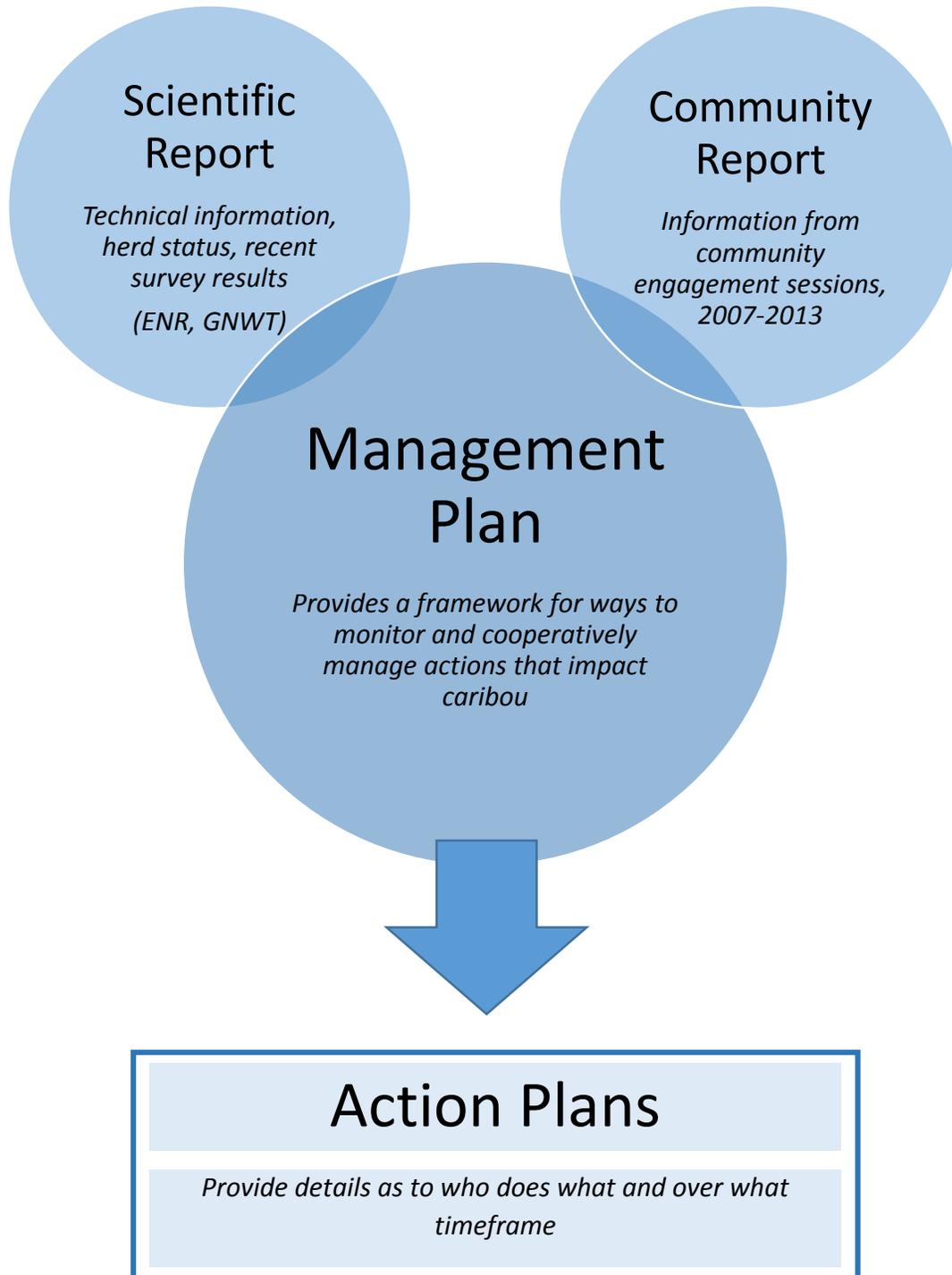


Seventeen communities were engaged in drafting the Management Plan:

	<p>The Cape Bathurst herd usually migrates through two settlement areas/regions and is typically harvested by four communities in the course of its annual cycle: Aklavik, Inuvik, Tsiigehtchic and Tuktoyaktuk</p>
	<p>The Bluenose-West herd usually migrates through three settlement areas/regions and is typically harvested by 13 communities: Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope, Norman Wells, Tulít'a, Déljñę, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok.</p>
	<p>The Bluenose-East herd usually migrates through four settlement areas/regions in the Northwest Territories and into the western portion of the Kitikmeot Region, Nunavut. The herd is typically harvested by nine communities: Wrigley, Norman Wells, Tulít'a, Déljñę, Whatì, Gamètì, Behchokò, Paulatuk, and Kugluktuk.</p>



Two other documents support the Management Plan, and the Management Plan will be used to create Action Plans for the herds:



The Plan describes:

- Principles and goals for taking care of the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East caribou herds;
- The need for a plan and the importance of working together;
- Current population estimates and trends;
- Roles and responsibilities of the wildlife co-management boards and agencies;
- Information required to effectively take care of the herds;
- How to make management decisions that can impact herds;
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- How to communicate with communities, harvesters, youth, and others.

The goals of the Plan are to:

- Maintain herds within the known natural range of variation;
- Conserve and manage caribou habitat; and
- Ensure that harvesting is respectful and sustainable.

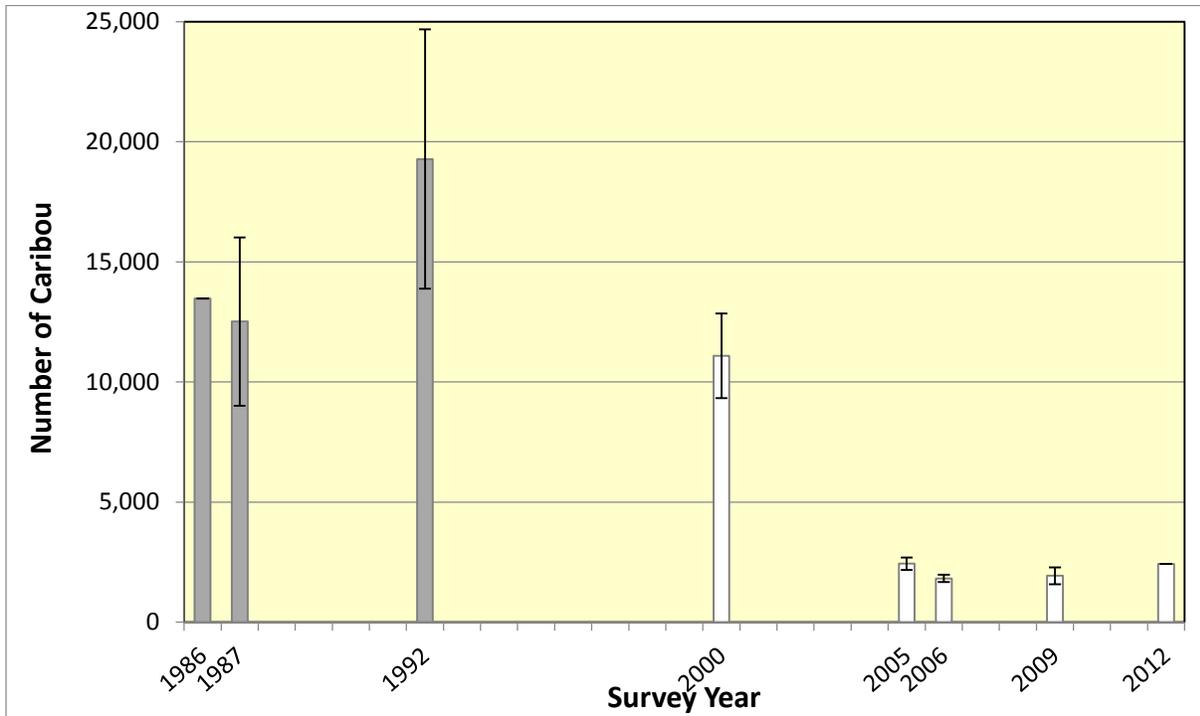
“It is great with the help of elders and communities, with agencies – we probably could revive the herd in no time.” (Whati)

“Local knowledge should be included with TK and science [in this plan].” (NWT Wildlife Federation)

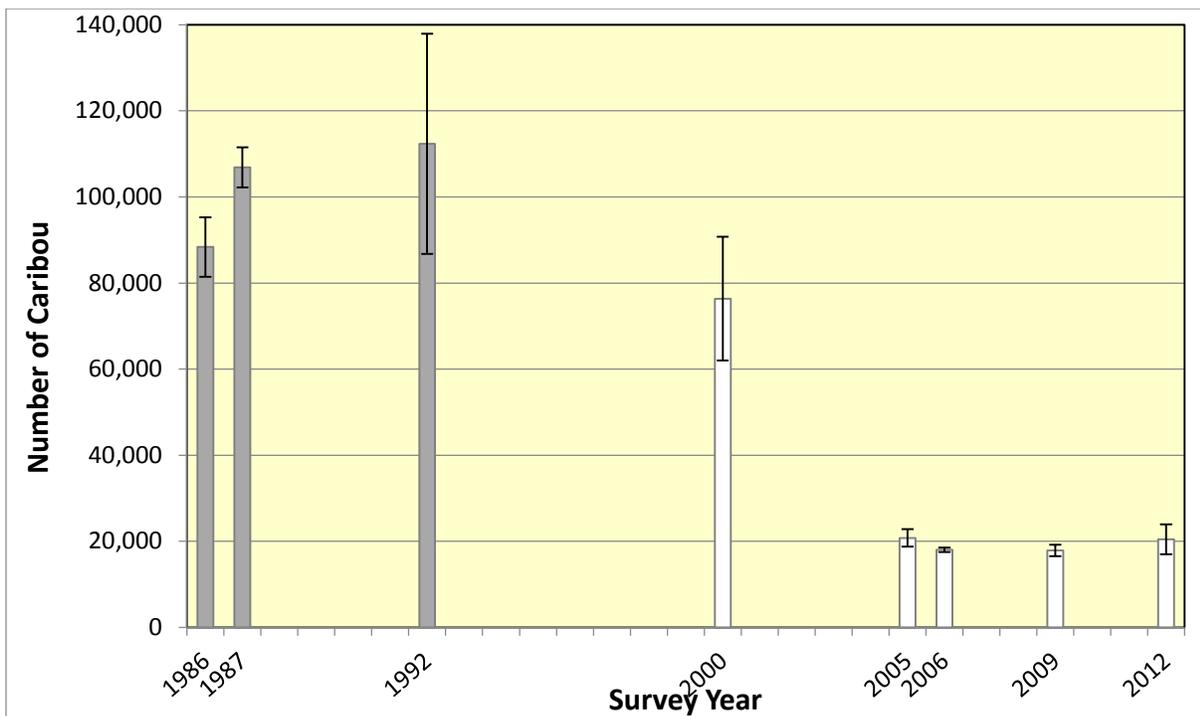
“Use traditional knowledge [to develop the management plan] – it’s very important to our way of hunting.” (Fort McPherson)

The Management Plan relies on scientific, community and traditional knowledge:

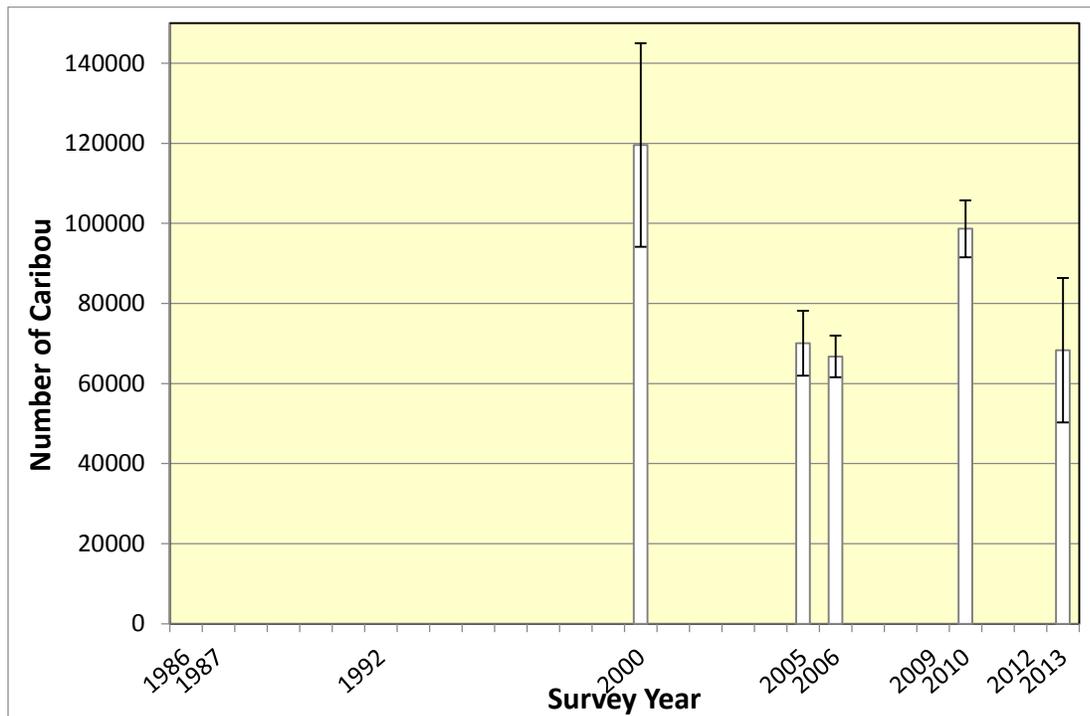
Cape Bathurst Herd



Bluenose-West Herd



Bluenose-East Herd



“Caribou have cycles like rabbit and foxes.” (Norman Wells)

“Not sure if it is a natural cycle or other reasons but I guess our job is to try to manage the best we can.” (Tsiigehtchic)

“Caribou are now going to places where they shouldn’t go. The changes may not necessarily be man-made; effects from industry may be part of the answer but we really don’t know. Do you think it may have something to do with climate change?” (Fort Good Hope)

“[We are] concerned about the health of caribou.” (North Slave Métis Alliance)

The Plan describes ways of monitoring and assessing herd status (Section 8):

Information	Community-Based		Scientific ¹	
	Measure	How often	Measure	How often
Population size	High, medium, low, critical	Throughout the year	High (Green) Medium (Yellow/Orange) Low (Red)	Green: every 4-5 years Yellow: every 3-4 years Orange and Red: every 3 years
Population trend and rate of change²	Observations: increasing, stable, decreasing	Throughout the year	Increasing, stable, decreasing	Annually
Productivity and recruitment	Observations: many or few calves	In summer, fall, and winter	Number of calves per 100 cows	Every winter (except years population estimate is done)
Adult composition	Observations: many or few bulls (and bull health)	Throughout the year	Number of bulls per 100 cows	Following population estimates or every 3-5 years
Body condition and health	Observations: good, fair, poor, abnormal	Throughout the year, especially during harvest	Fat indices, pregnancy rate, parasite and disease level	Level 1 annually; more intensive Level 2/3 every 5 years
Harvest levels	Harvest reporting	Monthly	Calculate total harvest and sex ratio from community data	Annually
Predator populations³	Observations: high, medium, low	Throughout the year	Carcass collection (reproduction, health, etc.)	Green and Yellow: every 5 years Orange and Red: every year
Range and movement patterns	Locations of caribou absence/presence	Throughout the year	Range use, movement patterns	Annually (based on collar data and observations throughout year)
Environment and habitat	Observations of food quality and availability, extent of burns, weather, snow depth, etc.	Throughout the year	Seasonal range use, fire, changes in plant productivity, green-up, climate, etc.	Annually to establish baseline and then to be determined thereafter
Human disturbance	Observations: high, medium, low	Throughout the year	Track land uses and disturbance levels	Annually, and then to be determined thereafter

¹ More information on scientific indices and their interpretation is available in the companion Scientific Report.

² While trend cannot be determined annually (trends can only be observed across or between years) the information needed for a trend analysis is collected annually.

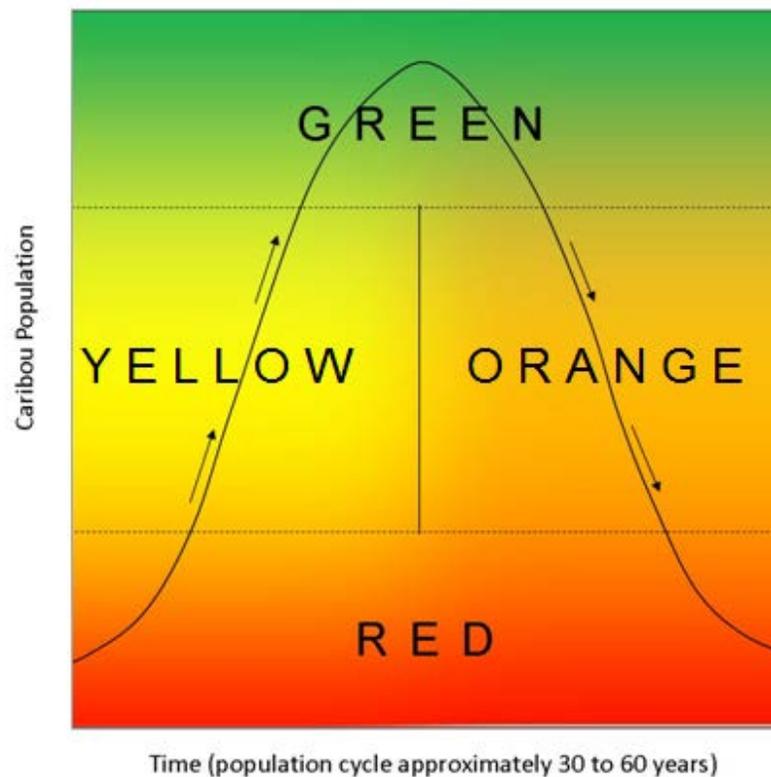
³ There is a need for further research and discussion about how these factors, such as predator levels, can affect these three caribou herd populations.

The Plan uses four levels of herd status to help make decisions:

Herd status is colour-coded green, yellow, orange, or red.

-  **Green:** The population level is high
-  **Yellow:** The population level is intermediate and increasing
-  **Orange:** The population level is intermediate and decreasing
-  **Red:** The population level is low

Management actions are based on defined phases of the population cycle. The herd status provides a trigger for specific actions.



The Plan relies on consensus-based thresholds for the status of the herds.

HERD	Historic High As measured by surveys	Threshold Between green & yellow/orange	Threshold Between red & yellow/orange
Cape Bathurst Herd	19,000	12,000	4,000
Bluenose West Herd	112,000	60,000	15,000
Bluenose East Herd	120,000	60,000	20,000

*“...it would be useful to have something that encourages hunter feedback about where caribou are, and what condition they are in.”
(Fort Simpson)*

*“Count caribou when they are migrating at traditional water crossing sites. We need a specific management plan for each area and within these plans we need accurate harvest reporting.”
(Tuktoyaktuk)*

“A majority bull harvest implies big bulls which is not good. Majority bull harvest would be okay if it was stipulated that it was young bulls – not the big breeders, teachers and leaders of the migration.” (Wrigley)

“When you mention maintaining caribou habitat that means you have to lobby against the industry that is coming in. They are the major concern. Without them, things will be okay.” (Tulit’a)

“There are other ways that the caribou are seeming to disappear. Late freeze-up causes deaths by falling through the ice. Are you monitoring these things?” (Gamètì)

The Plan describes management actions based on herd status (Section 9):

Management Actions Based on Herd Status/Colour Zone				
Management Action	The population level is intermediate and increasing	The population level is high	The population level is intermediate and decreasing	The population level is low
Education	<p>Recommend education programs for all status levels. Ideas for educational themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting total use of harvested caribou, and proper butchering and storage methods; • Limiting wounding loss; • Letting the leaders pass; • Promoting community hunts with experienced hunters; • Use of alternate species; and • Increased sharing of traditional foods. 			
Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and recommend protection for key habitat areas; • Review results of monitoring, including cumulative effects, to ensure enough habitat is available and caribou are able to move between areas of good habitat; • Recommend important habitat as a 'value at risk' for forest fire management. 			
Land use activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review results of cumulative effects monitoring programs; • Provide advice on mitigation of industrial impacts to proponents and regulators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review results of cumulative effects monitoring programs; • Provide advice on mitigation of the impacts of exploration and development activities to proponents and regulators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review results of cumulative effects monitoring programs; • Provide advice on mitigation of industrial impacts to proponents and regulators; • Provide active and accessible communication and recommend education programs for all including proponents and airlines; • Recommend increased enforcement of land use regulations, including community monitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work directly with proponents and regulators of exploration and development activities to advise on mitigation measures; • Review results of cumulative effects monitoring programs; • Provide active and accessible communication and recommend education programs for all including proponents and airlines; • Recommend increased enforcement of land use regulations, including community monitors.

Management Actions Based on Herd Status/Colour Zone				
Management Action	The population level is intermediate and increasing	The population level is high	The population level is intermediate and decreasing	The population level is low
Predators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue research programs to monitor predator condition (e.g., carcass collection and community monitoring programs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue research programs to monitor predator condition (e.g., carcass collection and community monitoring programs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review results of research programs that monitor predator abundance and predation rates; Consider recommending options for predator management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review results of research programs that monitor predator abundance and predation rates; Consider recommending options for predator management.
Harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend easing limits on subsistence and then resident harvests ; Consider recommending outfitter and commercial harvests at discretion of the ACCWM. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support harvest by beneficiaries of a Land Claim and members of an Aboriginal people, with rights to harvest wildlife in the Region; Recommend that if subsistence needs are met resident harvest should be permitted (with limits); Potentially recommend resident (non-beneficiary), non-resident, sport hunts, and/or commercial harvests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend a mandatory limit on subsistence harvest based on a TAH accepted by the ACCWM; Prioritize the collection of harvest information; Recommend no resident, outfitter or commercial harvest; Recommend a majority-bulls harvest, emphasizing younger and smaller bulls and not the large breeders and leaders; Recommend harvest of alternate species and encourage increased sharing, trade and barter of traditional foods, such as the use of community freezers; Recommend increased enforcement including community monitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend harvest of alternate species and meat replacement programs, and encourage increased sharing, trade and barter of traditional foods; Prioritize the collection of harvest information; Review of mandatory limit for subsistence harvest for further reduction; Recommend increased enforcement including community monitors; Resident, commercial, or outfitter harvest remain closed.

“It’s a hard issue to think about or deal with. Harvesting caribou is a tradition. I hunt for my family and people in other communities, and share my hunt.” (Kugluktuk)

The Plan includes a communication strategy and details on how it will be implemented and updated:

11.1 Implementation of the Plan

The success of this Management Plan depends upon continued cooperation and participation of all the signatories. Some of the key steps are:

- Annual meetings to share information, determine herd status, and decide on appropriate management actions;
- The development of Action Plans that lay out annual priorities for each herd;
- Adequate funding, organizational capacity and commitment from signatories and partners to carry out prioritized management actions;
- Acquiring information identified throughout the plan, including research and monitoring to expand our knowledge and understanding;
- Continued communication between different regions and levels of government, as well as ongoing dialogue with communities and the broader public.

11.2 Updating the Plan

This plan for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds will first be reviewed after five years (i.e., 2019) and at ten-year intervals thereafter.

Any Aboriginal, territorial or federal government, or wildlife management board, or designated Inuit organization may request a review, at any time, through a formal request to the ACCWM. The measures identified in this plan are intended to be effective and well-founded in research and best practises. As new information becomes available it will be incorporated into each scheduled update to ensure the plan continues to be based on the best and most current information. Any lessons learned as the Management Plan and Action Plans are implemented will also be incorporated in future versions of the plan, increasing its reliability and strength.

“Education is the key to cooperation, respect and compliance.” (Aklavik)

“Use the radio as a tool to inform harvesters on thresholds and requirements.” (Paulatuk)