



Ms. Camilla Tutcho
Interim Chair
Sahtú Renewable Resources Board
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January 20, 2021

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Dear Ms. Tutcho:

Responses to Information Requests – Round 1 – Délı̨ę 2021 Public Listening Session – Tı̨ch'ádı̨ hé Gots'edı̨ (Living with Wildlife) – Predators and Competitors

On December 1, 2020, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) received a list of information requests from the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB). ENR is pleased to provide the attached responses to the SRRB's information requests.

Sincerely,

Erin Kelly, Ph.D.
Deputy Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Attachment

c. The Honourable Shane Thompson, Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Dr. Brett Elkin, Assistant Deputy Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Deborah Simmons, Executive Director
Sahtú Renewable Resources Board

Mr. Jeff Walker, Superintendent, Sahtú Region
Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Heather Sayine-Crawford, A/Director of Wildlife
Environment and Natural Resources



Tłch'ádıı hé Gots'edı (Living with Wildlife)

Predators and Competitors

Environment and Natural Resources - Public Listening
Information Requests – Round 1

January 20, 2021

Information Request (IR) 1.1:

Tjch'ádii he Gots'edi – Caribou, Predators and Competitors

A. The Conservation Picture: Caribou, People and Planning

1. How are the caribou doing? Have you noticed any changes over the past year?

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) outlined the current status of mountain, boreal and barren-ground caribou in the Sahtu Settlement Area in its written submission for the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session. Since that submission, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) has conducted 3 composition surveys of the Bluenose-East herd. In March 2020, the survey resulted in a calf to cow ratio of 41.8: 100. Composition surveys in July 2020 and October 2020 resulted in calf to cow ratios of 46.9 and 51.7 per 100 cows, suggesting there was little calf mortality between July and October. This scientific information was presented at the 2020 ACCWM Annual Status Meeting.

ENR is currently planning surveys to obtain new population estimates for the Bluenose-East and Bluenose-West herds in June and July of 2021.

2. How are the people doing? Have you noticed any changes over the past year?

ENR looks forward to reading the responses submitted to the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) by communities.

3. How is the community conservation planning approach progressing?

ENR remains supportive of community conservation plans, as they can be a valuable part of overall wildlife and harvest management. Community conservation plans can contribute to broader management planning and processes that include communities and co-management partners from across a caribou herd's range. Staff at ENR welcomes opportunities to assist communities in supporting development of their community conservation plans at their request. We look forward to hearing from communities regarding how they are progressing with their community conservation planning and when we can meet to discuss them.

B. Predators

1. What stories or knowledge would you like to share about the past and present relationships between caribou, díga (wolf) and Dene/Métis?

The Species at Risk Committee status reports for northern mountain caribou, boreal caribou and barren-ground caribou include Indigenous traditional knowledge and community knowledge. Each status report includes a section on interactions with other wildlife, including both predators and competitors. ENR recommends that these status reports be added to the registry for the Déljñę 2021 Public Listening Session.

2. Should people play a role in controlling díga populations to help caribou now? If so, what should this look like?

ENR is interested in hearing the perspectives of Sahtú communities and the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) on this issue. The “Government of the Northwest Territories and Tłı̨chǫ Government Joint Proposal on Management Actions for Wolves (Díga) on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou (Ekwò) Herd Winter Ranges: 2021 – 2024” was developed for the North Slave Region and is just one action being undertaken as part of an overall coordinated approach to help support these seriously declining caribou herds. Wolves are the main predator of barren-ground caribou, and predator management can be an important part of caribou protection when populations are at extremely low levels. In the North Slave Region, the GNWT and Tłı̨chǫ Government heard community concerns over the number of wolves on the landscape and their impact on barren-ground caribou, and received recommendations from the Wek’èezhì Renewable Resources Board to include wolf management as part of our overall approach to recovery of these caribou herds. The GNWT and Tłı̨chǫ Government developed the proposal based on the best available scientific, local and traditional knowledge, experiences in other jurisdictions, and the findings of a wolf technical feasibility assessment conducted with the WRRB and other co-management partners. ENR currently has no plans to implement enhanced wolf management actions in the Sahtú region and would not consider any enhanced actions unless there was support from the Sahtú communities and the SRRB.

3. Are there any concerns that you have about other predators and their impacts on caribou?

ENR will summarize what is currently known about NWT predators and their impacts on caribou in its written submission for the Déljı̨ne 2021 Public Listening Session.

C. Competitors

1. What stories or knowledge would you like to share about the relationships between caribou, ɔ̨ejire (muskoxen) and Dene/Métis?

The Species at Risk Committee status reports for northern mountain caribou, boreal caribou and barren-ground caribou include Indigenous traditional knowledge and community knowledge. Each status report includes a section on interactions with other wildlife, including both predators and competitors. ENR recommends that these status reports be added to the registry for the Déljı̨ne 2021 Public Listening Session.

2. Should there be more encouragement to harvest ɔ̨ejire for food security and commercial harvest, and to help caribou? If so, what should this look like?

There are currently no restrictions for Indigenous harvesters who wish to harvest ɔ̨ejire (muskox) in the Sahtú, however, the current regulations require harvesters to report their harvest so that ENR can understand the current levels of Indigenous harvest. Five ɔ̨ejire tags for Resident Hunters are available through a draw system for S/MX/01 (see Figure 1). Another 30 tags are given to the SRRB,

which distributes tags to Renewable Resource Councils (RRCs). The RRCs have the authority to allocate those tags at their discretion. There are currently no commercial tags available for the harvest of muskox for a commercial purpose.

Before tag changes can be considered, a biological assessment needs to be done to assess sustainable harvest levels. ENR is conducting a muskox population survey this winter in the northern portion of the Sahtú. This survey, along with results of last winter’s survey, will be analyzed and reported on by the fall of 2021 which will inform this biological assessment.

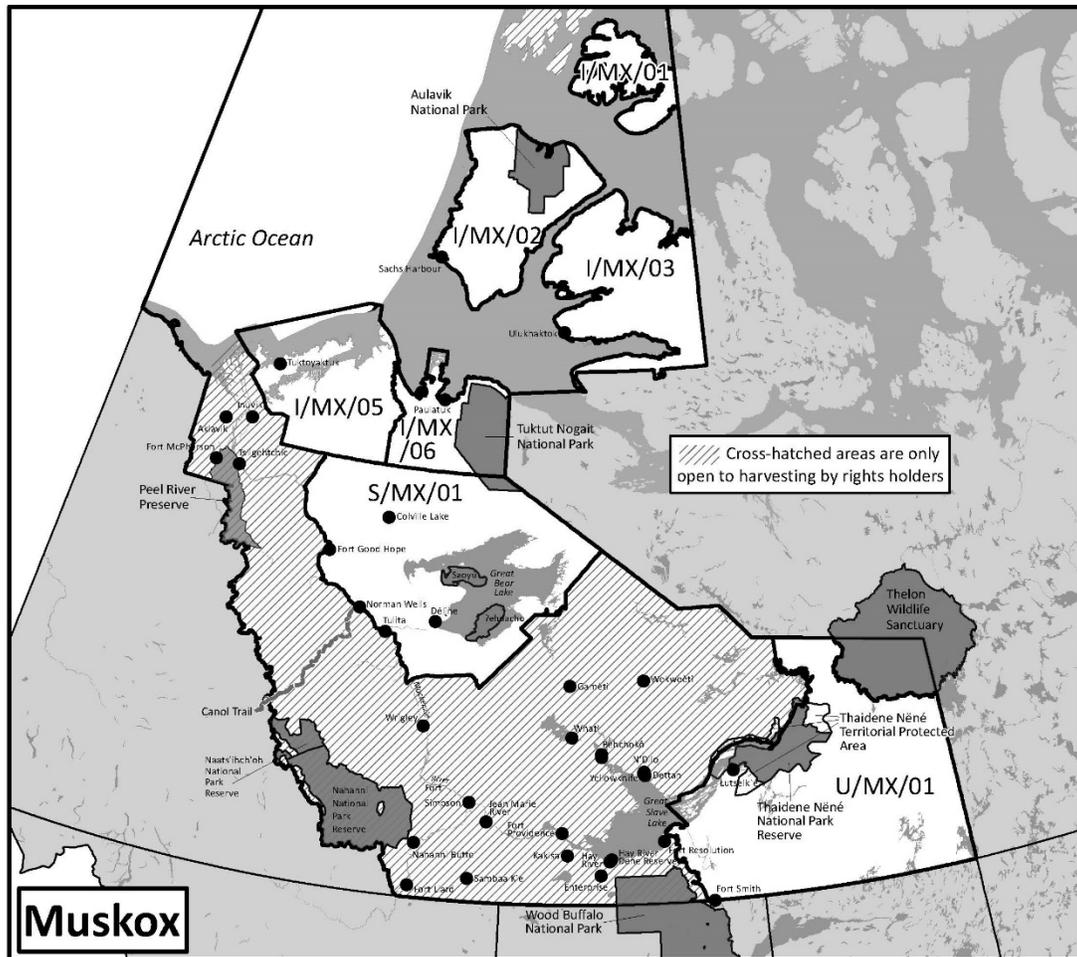


Figure 1 – Wildlife management areas for muskox harvesting in the NWT.

3. Are there any other concerns that you have about other competitors and their impacts on caribou?

ENR will summarize what is currently known about competitors of the three ecotypes of caribou that are found in the Sahtú Settlement Area and their impacts on caribou in its written submission for the Déłjñę 2021 Public Listening Session.

Information Request (IR) 1.2:

Sahtú Ragóʔa (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting

1. The SRRB made five recommendations related to barren-ground caribou hunting areas in the Sahtú region (Recommendations 7.1-7.5). Further evidence is needed to address area boundaries appropriately with respect to community jurisdictions. How should the Sahtú region define jurisdictions for barren-ground caribou harvest regulation?
2. Oral submissions to the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session indicate that Wildlife Act residency provisions and hunter education remain a “hot topic” within the Sahtú region. The SRRB wishes to consider this topic at the 2021 Public Listening Session. What roles do residency requirements and hunter education play in fostering or inhibiting respect for Dene harvesting protocols?

The Minister of ENR has until January 29, 2021 to respond to the Colville 2020 Public Listening Report and Reasons for Decision. Because Information Request 1.2 relates to the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session, ENR will defer responding to this IR until the Ministerial response to the Colville 2020 Public Listening Report and Reasons for Decision has been submitted.