



MAY 29 2008

Mr. Walter Bayha  
Chairman  
Sahtu Renewable Resources Board  
PO BOX 134  
TULITA NT X0E 0K0

### **SRRB Public Hearing Report – Bluenose-West Caribou Herd**

Thank you for your letter of March 5, 2008 providing the Public Hearing Report on the Bluenose-West Caribou Herd and recommendations from the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board. I understand that this is the first hearing undertaken by the Board and there was great public interest and involvement in the hearing held in Fort Good Hope. I recognize that this issue is very serious to the people of Sahtu and the Board's decisions have been structured to have the least impact on caribou users and the greatest benefit to caribou that is possible at this time.

This letter will address each recommendation as follows:

1. A Total Allowable Harvest of four percent be set for the Bluenose-West (BNW) Herd.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) accepts this recommendation. Following the approach taken in the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in regions, the ENR will not set a quota through regulations. ENR recognizes the agreement of the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in and Sahtu wildlife co-management boards and councils to allocate a total allowable harvest of four percent, based on the 2006 photo census among the regions and that this represents 350 caribou for Sahtu participants.

2. The harvest of BNW caribou herd should be biased toward bulls.

ENR accepts this recommendation. Again, following the approach in the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in regions, ENR will work with communities to support this approach.

3. A Sahtu Needs Level shall be allocated to Sahtu communities based on their average share, since 2005, of total harvests of BNW caribou.

ENR recognizes establishing a Sahtu Needs Level is the responsibility of the Board and that the Board is recommending an initial allocation of 200 caribou to Colville Lake, 130 caribou to Fort Good Hope, and 20 caribou to Norman Wells.

4. A Sahtu Needs Level should be enforced and monitored.

ENR accepts this recommendation and will provide instructions to the Department of Justice to prepare a draft regulation to require the use of tags for beneficiaries to hunt caribou. Once the regulation is in effect, ENR will provide tags to the Renewable Resource Councils in Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope and Norman Wells to administer. The intent is to have this regulation apply only to a new caribou management zone for BNW caribou herd. Therefore, this regulation and a new caribou management zone will need to come into effect at the same time. ENR officers will monitor compliance.

5. The current muskox quotas in the Sahtu Region should be increased.

ENR will proceed with regulation changes to proceed with the following quota changes:

- a. increase commercial quota to 30;
- b. increase resident quota from two to five;
- c. lift the quota for beneficiaries.

It is recognized that muskox are expanding their range and increasing in numbers throughout the Sahtu and can support additional harvest levels. ENR will follow up with the SRRB Executive Director on any technical questions related to these regulation changes.

Additional advice from the SRRB on the following matters would be helpful:

- a. are there areas where the presence of muskox may not be desired?
- b. it is critical that harvest is monitored as muskox are sensitive to overharvest. ENR's preference would be to continue the current approach where all harvesters require a tag to hunt muskox.
- c. currently, the resident harvest has come from one area. Should new management zones be set up and the resident harvest allocated among two zones?

6. There should be increased conservation education in the Sahtu communities.

ENR will be pleased to work with the Board and to provide resources for conservation education initiatives in the Sahtu. ENR provided \$25,000 to the Board last year to research traditional knowledge on caribou conservation and it would be helpful for ENR to receive a two-year proposal for review. ENR regional staff will follow up with Board staff accordingly.

7. Ensure caribou harvest data is obtained from the three BNW communities in the Sahtu.

ENR has had preliminary discussions with Colville Lake to initiate a Wildlife Guardian for the community. As part of the function of the position, the Wildlife Guardian would keep track of the harvest of barren-ground caribou, as well as participating in surveys/studies, and assisting with collection of samples for monitoring body condition and health. ENR anticipates having a Wildlife Guardian in place for the 2008/09 harvest season.

8. There should be increasing management efforts on alternative game.

ENR recognizes that the diminished harvest of barren-ground caribou may result in increased harvest of alternate species, particularly moose. ENR will work with the SRRB and the communities of Tulita and Fort Good Hope to establish a community-based monitoring system for moose populations in the Mackenzie Valley based on an established model from the Yukon Territory. ENR will provide a presentation on this approach at the next SRRB meeting.

9. Every effort should be made to ensure community participation in management studies.

ENR worked with the community of Colville Lake in spring 2008 to ensure the community was fully aware of spring classification surveys, had full participation in decisions on areas to be surveyed, and to provide two observers (one elder; one youth) for each day of the survey. An observer from Deline was also involved in this work. In addition, ENR plans to establish the Wildlife Guardian to ensure ongoing community participation in all management studies and programs.

10. Barren-ground caribou hunting zones in the Sahtu should be modified to reflect herd specific management.

ENR accepts this recommendation to eliminate Zone S/BC/03 and separate the Sahtu into two zones, S/BC/01 and S/BC/02 to reflect annual distribution of the BNW herd and the Bluenose-East herd. ENR has prepared the attached option for creating two new zones for the Sahtu Renewable Resource Councils and the Board to review. ENR will follow up with the Board and Councils to obtain comments.

11. The most current population management techniques should be brought to bear in making management decision on the BNW herd.

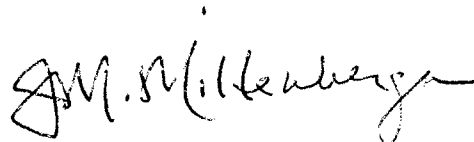
As committed at the November Public Hearing by the Board, ENR staff has been following up on developing computer models to investigate harvest scenarios. ENR will set up a modeling workshop for the Board and suggests that other Boards also participate in the workshop. ENR staff will follow up with Board staff.

12. Recommendations on development, habitat and caribou management.

ENR will continue to provide expert advice to Sahtu regulatory boards regarding potential impacts on barren-ground caribou from development activities. ENR has also been supporting efforts by the Deline Renewable Resources Council to develop mobile caribou protection measures.

In conclusion, the Board is to be commended on its recommendations to ensure that we have caribou forever. ENR will work with communities to address hardships that may be encountered over the next few years. However, our youth will appreciate the sacrifices made today so they may enjoy caribou in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.M. Miltenberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J.M." and a long, sweeping underline.

J. Michael Miltenberger

Attachment

