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## **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE TO ʔEŁETS'EWÉHKWE GODI (LIVING WITH WILDLIFE) – PREDATORS AND COMPETITORS AND HIDÓ GOGHA SENEĠOTS'IŹÁ (PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – PFF) POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change (ECC) provides the following responses to the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) Report and Reasons for Decisions and Recommendations of the Délıne 2021 Virtual Public Listening Session. The Minister has responded to decisions made by the SRRB as required under section 13.8.25 of the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA) but has also provided input on recommendations included in the SRRB's report. ECC will work with the SRRB and other wildlife co-management partners to implement recommendations directed to GNWT as described in our responses below.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1.1**

The SRRB recommends that communities continue to invite co-management partners to participate in community camps to facilitate opportunities to learn about Dene/Métis ts'ıłı (ways of life, including relationships with wildlife), náoweré (knowledge) and ʔeʔa (law), and to foster mutual understanding and relationships.

**Response:** Accept

**Reasons:**

ECC recognizes the value and important contribution of community-based initiatives to the overall management and conservation of wildlife in the Northwest Territories (NWT), and the importance of cross-cultural knowledge sharing. ECC remains very supportive of community-based on the land initiatives that help foster mutual understanding, collaboration and relationship building among co-management partners.

The Department is committed to support ECC staff participation in camps and other community-based on-the-land initiatives, which provide an opportunity to support the development of mutual respect and understanding among co-management partners. To the extent possible given other responsibilities, ECC staff will participate in and contribute to such opportunities when invited by community organizations.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1.2**

The SRRB recommends that ECC increase financial resources to facilitate attendance and participation in community camps, including and particularly for ECC personnel working in the Sahtú region to foster mutual understanding and relationships.

**Response:** Vary

The SRRB recommends that ECC continue to seek opportunities to increase financial resources to facilitate attendance and participation in community camps, including and particularly for ECC personnel working in the Sahtú region to foster mutual understanding and relationships.

**Reasons:**

ECC will continue to support community-based on the land programs for community members, Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations and other co-management partners. To the extent possible given other priorities, ECC staff will participate in and contribute to such opportunities when invited by community organizations. In addition, ECC has a wide range of programs and services that support on the land traditional activities and knowledge transfer. These include:

- **Take a Kid Trapping:** this funding program is designed to introduce school age youth in the NWT to the traditional harvesting practices of hunting, trapping, fishing and outdoor survival.
- **Take a Family on the Land:** this funding program is designed to support families to participate in outdoor learning experiences like camping, boating, fishing and hunting, storytelling, wood cutting and sharing traditional knowledge.
- **Community Harvesters Assistance Program:** this funding assistance is for hunters and trappers to offset capital and operating costs of harvesting activities. Funding is available for the purchase of small tools and related equipment that is required to store, process and preserve foods from community hunts or harvests.

ECC is also a partner in the NWT On The Land Collaborative, which promotes and supports on the land initiatives in the NWT.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1.3**

The SRRB recommends that both the GNWT and the Federal Government increase their support, including financial resources, to facilitate the cross-generational transfer of Dene/Métis ts'ìlì (ways of life), náoweré (knowledge), and ʔeʔa (law).

**Response:** Vary

The SRRB recommends that both the GNWT and the Federal Government continue to seek opportunities to increase their support, including financial resources, to facilitate the cross-generational transfer of Dene/Métis ts'ìlì (ways of life), náoweré (knowledge), and ʔeʔa (law).

**Reasons:**

ECC has provided and will continue to provide support for the development and implementation of Sahtú Nę K'ədí Ke, including in-kind, staff support, and financial resources where available. ECC has provided in-kind, capacity and financial support to the program in previous years.

ECC provides annual Community Harvesters Assistance Program (CHAP) funding to Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, renewable resource councils, and hunters and trappers committees. Each organization chooses how to best use the funds to support their members. The money can be used for hunting and trapping, promoting traditional practices, land-based livelihoods, and food security.

A review of CHAP began in 2021, and ECC engaged with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, Renewable Resources Boards, Renewable Resources Councils, Hunters and Trappers Committees and the public.

A new updated funding formula for CHAP will be used and tracked over the next 2 years to identify possible future changes to the formula based on funding needs.

ECC also offers a Hunter Education program, which could be modified and adapted to support youth training, if there is interest from Sahtú communities.

ECC is open to work with the SRRB, communities and other co-management partners to seek additional funding to support and facilitate cross generational transfer of information and on the land traditional activities. ECC encourages the SRRB to also reach out to the federal government directly regarding their support for this work.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2.1**

The SRRB recommends that further studies that take a biocultural approach and incorporate Dene/Métis ts'ı́ı (ways of life), náoweré (knowledge), and ɁeɁa (law) and scientific knowledge be undertaken to establish and better understand the impacts of predation on caribou.

**Response:** Accept

**Reasons:** ECC will work with the SRRB and other agencies and other partners to consider possible further studies that consider and incorporate Dene/Métis ts'ı́ı (ways of life), náoweré (knowledge), and ɁeɁa (law) and scientific knowledge to help increase our understanding of the impacts of predation on caribou.

ECC will also continue to use a range of established and new scientific techniques and methods to conduct research and monitoring that addresses important information needs and gaps.

It is important to note that the Sahtú region has had a harvest incentive program for wolves since 2010 to encourage more wolves to be harvested as a way to support the traditional economy, trapping, and the conservation and recovery of caribou populations.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2.2**

The SRRB recommends that further studies that take a biocultural approach and incorporate Dene/Métis ts'ı́ı (ways of life), náoweré (knowledge), and ɁeɁa (law) and scientific knowledge be undertaken to establish and better understand the impacts of competition between caribou and Ɂı́ts'é (moose), Ɂəjı́ré (muskox), and other competitors.

**Response:** Accept

**Reasons:**

ECC will work with the SRRB, Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, other agencies, institutions and co-management partners to identify additional studies and approaches that incorporate Dene/Métis ts'ı́ı (ways of life), náoweré (knowledge), and ɁeɁa (law) and scientific knowledge to establish and better understand the impacts of competition between caribou and Ɂı́ts'é (moose), Ɂəjı́ré (muskox), and other competitors.

ECC will continue to use scientifically accepted techniques and methods to conduct research and monitoring to address important information needs and gaps. All new information from ECC monitoring programs on the three caribou ecotypes that live

in and travel through the Sahtú, ʔekwé/nódele/ʔədə (barren-ground caribou), tɔdzı (boreal caribou), and shúhta goʔepé (mountain caribou), will continue to be shared with the SRRB, RRCs and communities.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2.3**

The SRRB recommends that communities, with support from the federal and territorial governments and other co-management partners, invite people from places with ongoing experience of relationships with ʔəjire (muskox) to Sahtú communities to teach skills in harvesting and preparing ʔəjire.

**Response:** Accept

#### **Reasons:**

ECC has provided and will continue to provide ongoing support to encourage and facilitate harvest of alternative species in the Sahtú through provision of in-kind, staff and financial resources where available. In March 2020, the GNWT had prepared to hold a workshop in Délıne on alternative harvest with a focus on harvesting and preparing ʔəjire (muskox), which was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid restrictions.

In response to requests for more information and on how to prepare ʔəjire (muskox), the GNWT and SRRB have been working on an instructional video that covers the harvest and preparation of ʔəjire with a focus on Sahtu stories and knowledge. This video will be freely available online to the public in summer of 2023.

ECC will continue to work with the SRRB, communities, agencies and other co-management partners to access resources to support alternative harvest and people from places with ongoing experience of relationships with ʔəjire to visit Sahtú communities to teach skills in harvesting and preparing ʔəjire.

### **DECISION 3.1**

After considering the PLS record on this issue, the SRRB is releasing a stand-alone Hıdó Gogha Sénégots'ıʔá (Planning for the Future - PFF) Policy document, titled Hıdó Gogha Sénégots'ıʔá (Planning for the Future – PFF) Policy and Guidance (2023). This policy addresses PFF principles, a PFF process, the content of a written PFF plan, and the SRRB's process for reviewing and approving a written PFF plan.

**Response:** Accept

**Reasons:**

ECC has reviewed the Hı́dó Gogha Sė́nė́gots'ı́zı́ (Planning for the Future – PFF) Policy and Guidance document.

ECC acknowledges and supports the three guiding principles and vision of Hı́dó Gogha Sė́nė́gots'ı́zı́. Further to the second principle of ʔedets'ė́ K'áokerewe (Self-Regulation), there may be times when a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) may be needed. The SDMCLCA and other land claim agreements include the concept of a TAH as an important tool that can be used as part of an overall approach to caribou management and conservation. ECC recognizes that putting a TAH in place is not an easy decision to make, but can be an important and necessary step to help address specific conservation concerns following discussions with all relevant co-management partners. A TAH was put in place for Bluenose-West caribou as a result of recommendations from the SRRB, Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board and Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (NWT) based on significant conservation concerns for this herd, whose range spans three land claim areas.

For clarity, ECC requests that the Hı́dó Gogha Sė́nė́gots'ı́zı́ (Planning for the Future – PFF) Policy and Guidance includes Ministerial Approval in the approval diagram on page 3 and the numbered steps on page 4, in addition to its reference in the text later on page 4.

ECC remains supportive of community conservation planning as part of an overall coordinated approach to caribou management and conservation. ECC will continue to engage with Sahtú communities on how to support and advance the development and implementation of community-based plans. ECC strongly encourages communities to invite ECC staff to take part in meetings during the development of their plans to support and increase knowledge transfer, communication, and a collaborative working relationship.