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በረለሲ 18, 2023

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David Sulvey

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December 18, 2023

Honourable Daniel Qavvik Minister of Environment Government of Nunavut

Re: NWMB Decision on the Government of Nunavut and Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organizations' Recommendations on Use of Total Allowable Harvest Tags on Caribou Mortalities during Collaring Research

Dear Minister Qavvik:

Proposals for NWMB Decision

During the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB or Board) Regular Meeting (RM004-2023) on November 29, 2023, the Government of Nunavut and the Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization submitted requests to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board concerning caribou mortalities that occur due to collaring research. The two proposals were similar but had several key differences.

The Government of Nunavut proposed that collaring mortalities should not count against the Total Allowable Harvest. They also recommended that this change be applied across Nunavut for caribou herds subject to a Total Allowable Harvest.

The Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization recommended that caribou collaring mortalities should not count against the Total Allowable Harvest. Their recommendation was specific to the Dolphin and Union caribou herd and included several other requests, specifically that:

- Inuit knowledge should be used in the planning stages of collaring research, and local Inuit be hired as field assistants;
- Mortalities that occur during collaring research be excluded from Total Allowable Harvest;
- For each collaring-related mortality:
 - Financial compensation be provided to the nearest Hunters and Trappers Organization;
 - Prompt butchering should be carried out by a local Inuit research participant;



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Note that the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific knowledge

- An autopsy should be carried out, and biological samples collected;
- During fieldwork, the Government of Nunavut should provide daily updates to affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations.

After considering all the arguments and evidence provided, the NWMB held an In-Camera Meeting (IC004-2023) on November 30, 2023, and made the following resolutions:

RESOLVED that, the Board agrees that research-related mortality not come off the Total Allowable Harvest for Nunavut caribou herds that have a Total Allowable Harvest. The Board does not consider that research-related mortality falls under the definition of Total Allowable Harvest in the Nunavut Agreement Section 5.1.1.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board encourages the Government of Nunavut to work with Inuit Organizations on developing a Nunavut-specific collaring policy for caribou.

The Government of Nunavut provided evidence showing that caribou collaring mortalities are rare and occur in less than 5% of collaring attempts. Collars have been deployed on the Dolphin and Union herd since the 1980s, with recent deployments in 2015, 2018, and 2021. From 2015 to 2023, there were 325 collaring attempts, resulting in 14 mortalities across the territory. Six of these mortalities occurred in herds subject to a Total Allowable Harvest. Based on this statistic, the Government of Nunavut stated that mortalities resulting from caribou collaring research do not pose a conservation concern to caribou.

The Government of Nunavut indicated that they have a collaring protocol in place for the Kivalliq Region, which has been shared government wide. These protocols outline procedures and guidelines for conducting collaring research. The extent to which other Government of Nunavut biologists follow the protocol is unclear. Also, existing protocols may address certain aspects related to humane kill provisions and handling mortalities but do not explicitly cover all the issues raised by the Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization.

The Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization's submission, which was specific to the Dolphin and Union caribou herd, highlighted their concern regarding the collaring activities in 2021. During that year, there were four mortalities recorded out of 36 deployments. This raised significant concerns, especially considering the status of



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the Dolphin and Union caribou herd and the limited number of tags available under the Total Allowable Harvest. They also stated that they were not informed during government consultations that collaring mortalities would be counted against the Total Allowable Harvest. They emphasized that lost harvest opportunities also result in missed chances to build relationships, strengthen social bonds, and enhance knowledge of the land.

The Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization emphasized that caribou are essential to Inuit culture and identity and play a significant role in the Inuit way of life. They also stated that, initially, when the collaring project began, there was no mention of mortalities being taken off the Total Allowable Harvest.

In reaching its resolution, the Board considered the written submissions from the Government of Nunavut and the Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization. These included the following key points:

- Both the Government of Nunavut and the Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization do not want caribou that die from collaring research to count towards the Total Allowable harvest for herds that are subject to a Total Allowable harvest.
- 2. The Government of Nunavut wants this to apply to all caribou herds in Nunavut that are subject to Total Allowable Harvest.
- 3. Counting caribou tags lost because of a collaring mortality towards the Total Allowable harvest represents a loss of Inuit rights to cultural expression.
- 4. The Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization made several collaringrelated recommendations concerning Inuit knowledge and participation in collaring work, compensation to affected communities, reporting, and sample collection.

The Board also listened to oral submissions from both applicants and other comanagement partners during its Regular Meeting on November 29, 2023. The Board asked the Government of Nunavut why collaring mortalities are counted towards the Total Allowable Harvest. The Government of Nunavut explained that the authority to count all mortalities (including those resulting from collaring research) towards the Total Allowable Harvest comes from Harvesting Regulation section 17(2) of the *Nunavut Wildlife Act* # R-011-2015 which states that:

"Every dead member of that species of wildlife must be accounted for in accordance with this section when administering, calculating and enforcing the



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provisions of the Act and regulations respecting the total allowable harvest for that species' population."

The Board then considered whether this authority from the *Nunavut Wildlife Act* is in line with the definition of harvest under the Total Allowable Harvest in the *Nunavut Agreement*. Section 5.1.1 of the *Nunavut Agreement* defines Total Allowable Harvests as:

"The amount of wildlife able to be lawfully harvested as established by the NWMB pursuant to Sections 5.6.16 to 5.6.18."

Based on this evidence, the Board ultimately determined that section 17(2) of the *Nunavut Wildlife Act* does not align with the *Nunavut Agreement*, which defines Total Allowable Harvest as the amount of wildlife of a particular stock or population that may be "lawfully harvested." As a result, the Board concluded there is no justification to count caribou mortalities due to collaring research towards a Total Allowable Harvest.

Further, the Board considered Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization's comprehensive list of best practices for collaring programs, including collaring mortalities not contributing to the Total Allowable Harvest, financial compensation and so on. The Board agreed that there was a need for a clear Nunavut-specific collaring policy for caribou, but it did not consider an NWMB decision to be the best way to do so. Also, it is not clear what *Nunavut Agreement* authority the Board would use if it were to make a decision. Therefore, the Board recommended that the Government of Nunavut collaborate with Inuit Organizations to develop a Nunavut-specific collaring policy for caribou, taking into consideration the issues raised by Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization.

The Board recognizes the importance of collaring research in managing caribou populations and encourages all parties to work together towards sustainable management of caribou in Nunavut.

Daniel Shewchuk

Chairperson

Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

c.c. Drikus Gissing, Government of Nunavut



Dec 21, 2023

Mr. Daniel Shewchuk Chairperson Nunavut Wildlife Management Board PO Box 1379 Igaluit, NU X0A 0H0

Re: NWMB Decision on the Government of Nunavut and Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organizations' Recommendations on Use of Total Allowable Harvest Tags on Caribou Mortalities during Collaring Research

Dear Mr. Shewchuk,

Thank you for your decision concerning the proposal to not use harvest tags should a caribou collaring mortality occur for those Nunavut herds with a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH). It is encouraging to know that there was a similar submission by co-management partners in the Kitikmeot region who focussed on the Dolphin and Union herd.

To reiterate the decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB):

RESOLVED that, the Board agrees that research-related mortality not come off the Total Allowable Harvest for Nunavut caribou herds that have a Total Allowable Harvest. The Board does not consider that research-related mortality falls under the definition of Total Allowable Harvest in the Nunavut Agreement Section 5.1.1.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board encourages the Government of Nunavut to work with Inuit Organizations on developing a Nunavut-specific collaring policy for caribou.

Under Article 5.3.9(a) of the *Nunavut Agreement*, I hereby accept the decision of the NWMB to not have research-related mortalities come off any established TAH, and will direct staff to make any necessary regulatory changes to implement this decision.

As noted in our submission, caribou collaring is highly specialized work, and we strive to only use the best contractors on our collaring programs. We will continue to work with comanagement partners, including Hunters and Trappers Organizations, when designing



and implementing collaring programs. My staff will ensure that any concerns are discussed with our contractor prior to the start of any collaring program and strict compliance throughout the project.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter and for the time and effort put into this decision by NWMB board staff and board members.

Sincerely,

Daniel Qavvik

Minister of Environment

Dave Clin cos 6816

Cc. Yvonne Niego, Deputy Minister, Environment