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Nunavut Anngutighatigut Aulapkaijtkut Katimajiat
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

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Tammaqtailinahuarriit anngutighat atuqhugit Inuit qaujimajatuqangillu ilihimaniillu ilitquhiannin
Conserving wildlife through the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific knowledge

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ᑎᑎᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ 1379
ᐱᑲᑲᑦᑲᑦ, ᓄᓇᑭᑦ X0A 0H0
☎ (867) 975-7300
📠 (888) 421-9832

Titiqqap Turaarvia 1379
Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0
☎ (867) 975-7300
📠 (888) 421-9832

Box 1379
Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0
☎ (867) 975-7300
📠 (888) 421-9832



July 05, 2022

Honourable David Akeeagok
 Minister of Environment
 Government of Nunavut

Re: Nunavut Wildlife Management Board’s Decision on the Total Allowable Harvest for Baffin Island Caribou

Dear Minister Akeeagok:

NWMB Decision

At the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board’s (NWMB) June 16, 2022, Regular Meeting (RM002-2022) in Iqaluit, the Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment recommended that the Board increase the annual total allowable harvest (TAH) for Baffin Island caribou—currently at 250—by 50 annually for the next 10 years (2022-2031). The Government of Nunavut further recommended that the Board modify a Non-Quota Limitation applicable to the sex of caribou to allow more females harvested with the TAH increase. The Department of Environment’s proposal states that it is based on new scientific information indicating increasing trends in calf-to-cow ratios and minimum counts of caribou in South Baffin from 2015 to 2022, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit indicating observed increase in abundance by communities, and input received during consultation tours in February 2022.

At this same Regular Meeting, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) also recommended that the Board increase the TAH for Baffin Island caribou from 250 to 350 in the first year by 75 in the second year, followed by an annual increase of 50 over eight years, resulting in a TAH of 825 by 2031. The QWB’s proposal further requested a change to the Non-Quota Limitation to increase the number of females in the TAH from 25 to 75, followed by annual increases that will result in 411 females in 10 years. The QWB’s proposal was based on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit of long-term caribou population cycles and Inuit observations of more caribou in many areas on Baffin Island. QWB stated that an increase in caribou harvested would allow critical food for caribou, lichen, to recover to levels that can support the increasing abundance of Qikiqtaaluk caribou.

During the NWMB’s In-Camera Meeting (IC002-2022) on June 17, 2022, the NWMB considered the Government of Nunavut’s and the QWB’s submissions, alongside all written



and oral arguments and evidence presented by co-management partners, and made the following decisions:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to sections 5.6.16, 5.16.17(b), and 5.3.3(a) of the Nunavut Agreement, the NWMB:

- i. Increase the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island caribou from 250 to 350 for the 2022/2023 harvest season.
- ii. Approve an annual increase to the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island caribou by 50 in the 2023/2024 harvest season, and each year for the next eight (8) years or until the NWMB has reason (such as new information) to review this decision.

FURTHER RESOLVES that pursuant to sections 5.6.48 and 5.3.3(a) of the Nunavut Agreement, the NWMB:

- i. Increase the number of female caribou that may be harvested within the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island from 25 to 75 for the 2022/2023 harvest season.
- ii. Approve an annual increase to the number of female caribou that may be harvested within the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island to 20% in the 2023/2024 harvest season and each year for the next eight (8) years, or until the NWMB has reason (such as new information) to review this decision.

Reasons for NWMB Decisions

Decision to increase the TAH

In reaching its decisions, the NWMB considered the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific information. The NWMB considered the results from seven Baffin Island composition surveys (2015 to 2022) that show potentially increasing ‘minimum counts and good calf production—indicators that the population may be stable or increasing. For example, the 2021 composition survey resulted in a minimum count of 1,734 caribou (bulls, cows, yearlings, and calves) in South Baffin and 192 caribou in North Baffin, with a calf-to-cow ratio above 30:100 for both areas, suggesting good productivity. The NWMB understands that the Department of Environment does not consider composition surveys sufficient to infer population abundance. However, the volume of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit presented by Inuit and HTO representatives at the Regular Meeting about the observed increase and the results from seven years of composition surveys was sufficient to persuade the NWMB to approve a limited increase to the TAH.



During its Regular Meeting, the NWMB listened to oral submissions from representatives of 10 Hunters and Trappers Organizations that harvest caribou on Baffin Island, Inuit partners, and Inuit elders. Of those present at the RM, Inuit seemed to express unanimous support for increasing the TAH of Baffin Island caribou. There seems to be agreement between the Government of Nunavut and Inuit knowledge holders that the Baffin Island caribou population appears to be increasing and that an increase in the TAH may be warranted in the circumstances. The NWMB decided to accept these submissions and rely on them to make its decision.

Decision to adopt a phased increase in the TAH

The proposal from the Department of Environment was to increase the TAH by 50 caribou annually until 2031. Similarly, the QWB requested that the TAH be increased by 100 caribou in 2022, 75 in 2023, and 50 each year from 2024 to 2031. Based on the evidence and argument before it, the NWMB decided to increase the TAH by 100 caribou in the first year, and by 50 caribou in each of the next 9 years. With its decision, the NWMB recognizes and supports the common positions of the Department of Environment and the QWB for a phased approach to the harvest management of Baffin Island caribou. The NWMB is aware that an increase in the TAH is risky, given the last island-wide abundance survey was in 2014 and the unknown impacts of illegal harvesting on recovery. However, agreements reached between co-management partners weigh significantly in the NWMB’s consideration. In this case, the NWMB heard government and Inuit parties agree about increasing the TAH despite some disagreement on the specific numbers in the next two years.

In the circumstances, the NWMB considered sufficient reasons to approve an increase in the TAH and adopted a phased approach until new information becomes available to help mitigate any risks. Furthermore, the NWMB took account of the Department of Environment statements about research and harvest monitoring, face-to-face meetings with HTOs, and monitoring the recovery of Baffin Island caribou. The NWMB also heard how important Inuit perspectives and Inuit Qaujijimajatuqangit are to caribou management.

Decision to increase the Non-Quota Limitations

The NWMB decided to increase the proportion of females in the harvest from 10 percent to approximately 20 percent for the next 10 years. When it decided to change the NQL, the NWMB considered that the Department of Environment and the QWB recommended increasing the number of females in the harvest. The NWMB understands that the survival of adult female caribou significantly influences population size. However, harvesting



female caribou is also a part of Inuit culture and tradition. The NWMB's decision seeks to reflect and balance these two perspectives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The NWMB commends the collaborative work of co-management partners in the management of Baffin Island caribou. Considering that the recovery of Baffin Island caribou is a priority for the parties and mindful of concerns brought before the NWMB through oral and written submissions, the Board recommends the following:

- Improved communication between the Department of Environment, the QWB, and affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations to foster trust and effective collaboration in the management of Baffin Island caribou;
- Greater inclusion of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and knowledge from Inuit harvester and Elders in research and decision-making on the management of Baffin Island caribou; and
- Prioritize increased research, harvest monitoring, and reporting on Baffin Island caribou with the full involvement of Inuit to quantitatively assess the regional abundance and ensure that any negative impacts of current management on the herd's recovery are identified and acted upon promptly.

The NWMB looks forward to your reply and completion of the *Nunavut Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process and prompt notification of affected parties. If you have questions regarding this letter, do not hesitate to contact the NWMB.

Sincerely,

Joshua T. Arreak
Acting Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

c.c. Drikus Gissing, Director of Wildlife Management, Government of Nunavut.



July 14, 2022

Mr. Joshua Arreak
Acting Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
P.O. Box 1379
Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0

Re: Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's Decision on Total Allowable Harvest for Baffin Island Caribou

Dear Mr. Arreak,

Thank you for your decision concerning an increase to the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) and Non-Quota Limitations (NQLs) for Baffin Island Caribou.

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

"RESOLVED that, pursuant to sections 5.6.16, 5.16.17(b), and 5.3.3(a) of the Nunavut Agreement, the NWMB:

- i. Increase the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island caribou from 250 to 350 for the 2022/2023 harvest season.*
- ii. Approve an annual increase to the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island caribou by 50 in the 2023/2024 harvest season, and each year for the next eight (8) years or until the NWMB has reason (such as new information) to review this decision.*

FURTHER RESOLVES that pursuant to sections 5.6.48 and 5.3.3(a) of the Nunavut Agreement, the NWMB:

- i. Increase the number of female caribou that may be harvested within the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island from 25 to 75 for the 2022/2023 harvest season.*
- ii. Approve an annual increase to the number of female caribou that may be harvested within the total allowable harvest for Baffin Island to 20% in the 2023/2024 harvest season and each year for the next eight (8) years, or until the NWMB has reason (such as new information) to review this decision."*



I hereby accept your decision to approve:

- i. An increase to the TAH in the Nunavut settlement area of Baffin Island from Two Hundred and Fifty (250) to Three Hundred and Fifty (350) caribou.
- ii. An annually increase the TAH by 50 caribou in the 2023/2024 Harvest Season and each year thereafter for the next eight (8) years.
- iii. To increase the number of female caribou that may be harvested within the TAH from Twenty-Five (25) to Seventy-Five (75) for the 2022/2023 Harvest Season.
- iv. An annual increase of 20% to this NQL beginning in the 2023/2024 Harvest Season and each year thereafter for Eight (8) years.

I will implement this TAH decision forthwith and the TAH will be put into regulation and be implemented as a final decision. These decisions will remain in place until I receive a new NWMB decision following the submission of new information to the Board.

I wish to thank the Board for their hard work and careful consideration of this important conservation and management issue. I trust that our collaborative work will continue in the implementation of this management decision.

Sincerely,

David Akeeagok,
Minister of Environment

Cc. Jimmy Noble Jr., Deputy Minister, Environment