



Mr. Joseph Judas, Chair  
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board  
4504 49<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE  
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 1A7

DEC 06 2019

Dear Mr. Judas:

**WRRB Reasons for Decision Final Report – Kòk'èetì ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) Herd**

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The Tłıchǫ Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories have considered the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) "*Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) Reasons for Decisions Related to a Joint Proposal for the Management of the Kòk'èetì ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) Herd*" received on October 4, 2019.

Please find attached our joint response to the WRRB reasons for decisions and recommendations included in the Final Report. We look forward to working with the WRRB for the ongoing management of the Kòk'èetì ekwò (Bathurst Caribou).

Sincerely,

Grand Chief George Mackenzie  
Tłıchǫ Government

Shane Thompson  
Minister  
Environment and Natural Resources

Attachment

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# **Response to Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) Reasons for Decisions Related to a Joint Proposal for the Management of the Kòk'èetì ekwò (Bathurst Caribou) Herd**

## **DETERMINATION**

### **Determination #1-2019 (Kòk'èetì Ekwò)**

The Board determines that a TAH of zero for all users of the Kòk'èetì ekwò herd for 2019/20 and 2020/21 harvest seasons. For further clarification, the absolute number of ekwò that can be harvested from the Kòk'èetì ekwò herd in Wek'èezhì is zero.

**Response:** ACCEPT

**Reasons:** Tłıchǫ Government and GNWT accept this determination for Wek'èezhì and once again thank the Board for its strong focus on conservation and the need to limit harvest of this rapidly declining herd. ENR will amend regulations as needed to implement this determination in Wek'èezhì and in the associated caribou management zones as soon as practicable.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation #1-2019 (Kòk'èetì Ekwò): Effectiveness of Mobile Zone**

To determine if the MCBCCA is functioning as intended, GNWT and TG will analyze the extent of overlap of neighboring herds during early to late winter in order to complete a quantitative assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the MCBCCA and the risk of inadvertent harvesting of Kòk'èetì Ekwò and report to the WRRB with this assessment by February 1, 2020.

**Response:** VARY

GNWT varies 'Recommendation #1-2019' to say the following:

To determine if the MCBCCA is functioning as intended, GNWT and TG will analyze the extent of overlap of neighboring herds during early to late winter in order to complete a quantitative assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the MCBCCA and the risk of inadvertent harvesting of Kòk'èetì Ekwò and report to the WRRB with this assessment by ~~February 1, 2020~~ **March 31, 2020**.

**Reasons:** The Tłıchǵ Government and GNWT agree that the effectiveness of the Mobile Core Bathurst Caribou Conservation Area (MCBCCA) should be regularly assessed. The GNWT is currently working on a draft report that documents the development of the MCBCCA since 2015, the report also assesses its effectiveness. This report will include maps of the overlap of the Bathurst herd with neighbouring herds in relation to the mobile zone. The report will be completed by GNWT and provided to WRRB by March 31, 2020.

**Recommendation #2-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To utilize the expertise of harvesters to monitor any inadvertent harvest of Kqk'èetì ekwò, TG will hire up to four community monitors per community to collect and report on harvest data monthly throughout the 2019/20 and 2020/21 harvest seasons.

**Response:** VARY

**Reasons:** Tłıchǵ Government varies 'recommendation #2-2019' to say the following:

To utilize the expertise of harvesters to monitor any inadvertent harvest of Kqk'èetì ekwò, TG will hire ~~up to four community~~ one community monitor per community to collect and report on harvest data monthly throughout the 2019/20 and 2020/21 harvest seasons.

**Reasons:** Tłıchǵ Government thinks that hiring up to 16 people to report on the harvesting of the Bathurst herd that has a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of zero would be an inefficient use of resources. Tłıchǵ Government aims that monitors can report on all harvest activity and not just the Kqk'èetì Ekwò.

**Recommendation #3-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Emigration**

By December 1, 2019, in order to provide the WRRB clarity on the status of the Kqk'èetì ekwò, GNWT and TG are to provide, in plain language, their positions regarding the implications of emigration of Kqk'èetì ekwò to other herds, and how this emigration will influence adaptive management.

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchǵ Government and the GNWT vary 'Recommendation #3-2019' to say the following:

By ~~December 1, 2019~~ February 28, 2020, in order to provide the WRRB clarity on the status of the Kqk'èetì ekwò, GNWT and TG are to provide, in plain language, their positions regarding the implications of emigration of Kqk'èetì ekwò to other herds, and how this emigration will influence adaptive management.

**Reasons:** There are a number of initiatives contained in these recommendations as well as the recommendations contained within the 'WRRB Reasons for Decision Final Report – Sahtì Ekwò (Bluenose-East) Herd' that will take priority and require a large amount of work. We respectfully request more time to respond to this recommendation.

**Recommendation #4-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Predator Monitoring**

To improve the understanding of the role of predators on the decline of the herd and increase adult and calf survival, GNWT and TG will provide the following to the WRRB:

- 1) Sighting rates of dīga, sahcho, golden det'qcho, and nògha during Kqk'èetì ekwò composition surveys by December 1 each year, beginning in 2019; and,
- 2) A set of criteria that will determine the numbers of predators to be targeted for annual removal, should the decision be made to do so, by December 1, 2020.

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchq Government and the GNWT vary 'Recommendation #4-2019' to say the following:

To improve the understanding of the role of predators on the decline of the herd and increase adult and calf survival, GNWT and TG will provide the following to the WRRB:

- 1) **Annual** sighting rates of dīga, sahcho, golden det'qcho, and nògha during Kqk'èetì ekwò composition surveys and TG's Ekwò Nàxoède K'è program ~~by starting December 1 each year 2020 beginning in 2019;~~
- 2) A set of criteria that will determine the ~~numbers of~~ target levels of ~~predators~~ **dīga to be targeted** for annual removal, should the decision be made to do so, by December 1, 2020

**Reasons:** Targets for removal of dīga is feasible by Dec 2020, but it is uncertain at this point whether targets for annual removal of grizzly bears, golden eagles, and wolverines can be established prior to completion of the respective assessments. Neither GNWT or Tłıchq Government consider that there will be removal of eagles, bears, wolverines, and we will look to the wolf management plan to help determine what levels of dīga may be targeted for annual removal.

GNWT will continue to collaborate with GN on monitoring and management of predators that may be affecting Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou.

#### **Recommendation #5-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Dìga Harvest**

To ensure that harvest of dìga is contributing to the conservation of Kqk'èetì ekwò:

- 1) TG and GNWT should provide to the WRRB the number of dìga to be targeted for removal during the harvest season from the Kqk'èetì ekwò winter range by December 1 each year, beginning in 2019;
- 2) TG and GNWT should determine the number of dìga to be targeted for removal based on (i) dìga sightings during Kqk'èetì ekwò composition surveys and (ii) likely exposure of Kqk'èetì ekwò to dìga associated with neighbouring herds during the winter season; and,
- 3) TG and GNWT will coordinate the *Enhanced North Slave Dìga Harvest Incentive Program* and the *Community-based Dìga Harvest Training Program* to determine their role in removing the targeted number of dìga.

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchq Government and the GNWT vary 'Recommendation #5-2019' to say the following:

- 1) To ensure that harvest of dìga is contributing to the conservation of Kqk'èetì ekwò, Tłıchq Government and the GNWT will demonstrate in their wolf management proposal for Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou, target levels for wolf removals, management actions / efforts towards wolf removal and measures of wolf removal effectiveness using both caribou-centered (eg. population size, survival rates) and wolf-centered indicators (e.g. harvest numbers, catch per unit effort). ~~TG and GNWT should provide to the WRRB the number of dìga to be targeted for removal during the harvest season from the Kqk'èetì ekwò winter range by December 1 each year, beginning in 2019;~~
- 2) ~~TG and GNWT should determine the number of dìga to be targeted for removal based on (i) dìga sightings during Kqk'èetì ekwò composition surveys and (ii) likely exposure of Kqk'èetì ekwò to dìga associated with neighbouring herds during the winter season; and,~~
- 3) ~~TG and GNWT will coordinate the *Enhanced North Slave Dìga Harvest Incentive Program* and the *Community-based Dìga Harvest Training Program* to determine their role in removing the targeted number of dìga.~~

**Reasons:** Tłıchq Government and GNWT are currently developing a wolf management proposal for Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou. This management proposal will include monitoring of wolves harvested and criteria for assessing whether these removals are effective, using indicators based on wolves and indicators based on caribou. An annual report summarizing wolf removals and assessing the effectiveness of the program will be developed and made available to the WRRB. This will include all aspects of the wolf program, including the enhanced incentives program and the Tłıchq harvester training program.

**Recommendation #6-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Enhanced North Slave Dìga Harvest Incentive Program**

To help the Board understand the effectiveness of the GNWT's *Enhanced North Slave Dìga Harvest Incentive Program* on Kqk'èetì ekwò, TG and GNWT will provide a comprehensive report on the program to the WRRB by May 31 each year. The contents of this report will be developed in collaboration with the Board and will include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- 1) Provide the location and number of dìga harvested as a part of the Harvest Incentive Program; and,
- 2) Provide clear criteria to measure the effectiveness of the Harvest Incentive Program based on both scientific and TK.

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchq Government and the GNWT vary 'Recommendation #6-2019' to say the following:

To help the Board understand the effectiveness of the GNWT's *Enhanced North Slave Dìga Harvest Incentive Program* on Kqk'èetì ekwò, TG and GNWT will provide a comprehensive report on the program to the WRRB by ~~May 31~~ **August 1** each year. The annual report will report on the overall wolf management program each year. **This will include all components of the proposal including:**

- 1) **harvest levels resulting from the Enhanced North Slave Dìga Harvest Incentive Program and other actions;**
- 2) **assigning removals to caribou herd range;**
- 3) **results of research and monitoring programs (collaring and samples collection); and,**
- 4) **an assessment of the effectiveness of the program for the year using both caribou-centred and wolf-centered indicators.**

~~The contents of this report will be developed in collaboration with the Board and will include, but not be limited to, the following information:~~

- ~~1) Provide the location and number of dìga harvested as a part of the Harvest Incentive Program; and,~~
- ~~2) Provide clear criteria to measure the effectiveness of the Harvest Incentive Program based on both scientific and TK.~~

**Reasons:** Tłıchq Government and the GNWT feel it would be more appropriate and efficient to submit a report on the entire wolf management proposal on an annual basis.

**Recommendation #7-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To help the Board understand the effectiveness of the TG's Community-based Dìga Harvest Training Program, TG and GNWT will provide a comprehensive report on the program to the WRRB by May 31 each year. The contents of this report will be developed in collaboration with the Board and will include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- 1) provide the location and number of dìga harvested as a part of the Harvest Training Program; and,
- 2) provide an assessment of how the training will contribute to future dìga harvesting and management.

**Response:** VARY

**Reasons:** GNWT and Tłıchq Government vary 'recommendation #7-2019' to say the following:

To help the Board understand the effectiveness of the TG's Community-based Diga Harvest Training Program, TG and GNWT will provide a comprehensive report on the program to the WRRB by ~~May~~ July 31 each year. The contents of this report will be developed in collaboration with the Board and will include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- 1) provide the location and number of dìga harvested as a part of the Harvest Training Program; and,
- 2) provide an assessment of how the training will contribute to future dìga harvesting and management

**Reasons:** July 31 is a more realistic date because of challenges in the Community-based Dìga Harvest Training Program. This time will be used to reinvigorate the Program.

**Recommendation #8-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To determine the current abundance, trend and distribution of nògha, GNWT and TG will compile existing TK and scientific information for nògha in the NWT and Nunavut on the Kqk'èetì and Sahtì ekwò ranges by April 1, 2020. The data will be used by the Grizzly Bear Biological and Management Feasibility Working Group to expand the collaborative sahcho biological and management feasibility assessment to include nògha.

**Response:** ACCEPT

**Reasons:** The GNWT notes that scientific evidence to date does not identify wolverines as a major predator of barren-ground caribou. Wolverines are primarily scavengers and current evidence suggests that their abundance on the Bathurst herd's range has declined as the herd has declined. The standard method of monitoring wolverine abundance and distribution has been DNA Mark-Recapture Sampling; the GNWT has

conducted monitoring in the Daring Lake area and the diamond mines have had similar programs in their areas. GNWT notes that all available information up to 2014 is contained in the Species Status Report for Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) in the Northwest Territories.

**Recommendation #9-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

The Board recommends GNWT and TG develop a draft agreement and timelines for joint management efforts to manage the Kqk'èetì and Sahti ekwò and their ranges by February 29, 2020. This draft agreement should be developed in cooperation with the BCAC, the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management, and discussed with the GN wildlife officials and NWMB as soon as possible.

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchq Government and the GNWT vary 'Recommendation #9-2019' to say the following:

GNWT will work with GN to further develop the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for collaboration in the shared management responsibilities of wildlife including barren-ground caribou and their ranges by March 31, 2020.

~~The Board recommends GNWT and TG develop a draft agreement and timelines for joint management efforts to manage the Kqk'èetì and Sahti ekwò and their ranges by February 29, 2020. This draft agreement should be developed in cooperation with the BCAC, the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management, and discussed with the GN wildlife officials and NWMB as soon as possible.~~

**Reasons:**

The GNWT has an MOU with the GN on monitoring and management of shared caribou herds, and will develop this MOU further with the GN to specify priorities for the next few years. Collaboration at a technical level between GNWT and GN on caribou surveys and other programs is extensive, and a minister's level meeting was held in April 2019 and another is scheduled in the coming months on management of shared caribou herds.

**Recommendation #10-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To increase community understanding of work being done for Kqk'èetì ekwò, TG will report annually, on the successes and challenges of Ekwò, Nàxoède K'è to Tłıchq communities and schools.

**Response:** ACCEPT

**Reasons:** Tłıchq Government accepts this recommendation.

**Recommendation #11-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To ensure Tłıchq communities have access to nutritious, safe food that fits their lifestyle and provides a healthy diet throughout the year, and in light of a closed harvest on Kqk'èetì ekwò, TG and GNWT will discuss priorities and solutions for food security issues, such as harvesting alternative country foods and/or implementing meat replacement programs, with each Tłıchq community by March 31, 2020.

**Response:** ACCEPT

**Reasons:** GNWT and Tłıchq Government accept this recommendation and refer to the joint answer of GNWT and Tłıchq Government to Recommendation #8-2019 (Sahti Ekwò). GNWT and Tłıchq Government ask for clarification from WRRB on what is meant by a “meat replacement” program.

The GNWT will continue to support the Tłıchq Government through funding that is provided for alternative sources of country food including, but not limited to, moose hunting, Beverly caribou hunting, fish nets, etc. This recommendation will also be addressed in part through the implementation of ENR's Sustainable Livelihoods Action Plan in collaboration with many partners. This Action Plan outlines actions related to country food research, development of harvesting mentorship and training programs, opportunities for youth, and community food systems planning, all of which can include focus on alternative foods.

**Recommendation #12-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To increase public understanding of the need for Ɂekwò management actions, starting in January 2020, TG and GNWT will:

- 1) exchange information about Kqk'èetì and Sahti ekwò with Tłıchq communities, via focus groups and community meetings; and,
- 2) produce and distribute educational materials, via radio, television, social media and workshops, to the general public about the reasons for the Kqk'èetì and Sahti ekwò, population declines and the factors affecting the declines, including emigration.

**Response:** ACCEPT

**Reasons:** Tłıchq Government will implement paragraph 1 and GNWT will implement paragraph 2.

### **Recommendation #13-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Population Surveys**

To ensure timely adaptive management, GNWT will conduct population surveys for Kqk'èetì ekwò every two years at the same time as Sahti ekwò and Beverly/Ahiak surveys. Therefore, the next population surveys will take place in June 2020.

**Response:** VARY

ENR varies 'Recommendation #13-2019' to say the following:

To ensure timely adaptive management, GNWT will conduct population surveys for Kqk'èetì ekwò every two years at the same time as ~~the~~ Sahti ekwò and ~~Beverly/Ahiak~~ surveys. Therefore, the next population surveys will take place in June 2020.

**Reasons:** GNWT plans to carry out population surveys of the Kqk'èetì and Sahti ekwò herds every two years, as described in the joint management proposals. The Government of Nunavut has been the lead on population surveys of the Beverly caribou. GNWT will continue to collaborate with GN on monitoring and management of this herd.

### **Recommendation #14-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Pregnancy Monitoring**

To better monitor the pregnancy rates of the Kqk'èetì ekwò herd, GNWT and TG should implement Kqk'èetì ekwò pregnancy monitoring through fecal pellet collection in the winter months, every year starting January 2020. Community members should have the opportunity to participate in the collection of fecal pellets on the Kqk'èetì ekwò winter range.

**Response:** VARY

TG and ENR vary 'Recommendation #14-2019' to say the following:

To better monitor the pregnancy rates of the Kqk'èetì ekwò herd, GNWT and TG should implement Kqk'èetì ekwò pregnancy monitoring through fecal pellet collection in the winter months, every year starting January 2020. ~~To the extent possible,~~ community members should have the opportunity to participate in the collection of fecal pellets on the Kqk'èetì ekwò winter range.

**Reasons:** Tłı̨chq Government will continue to rely on the GNWT Kqk'èetì ekwò caribou pregnancy monitoring through fecal pellet collection that is done in conjunction with helicopter-based late winter composition surveys. The GNWT will continue to collect fecal samples during late-winter caribou composition surveys of the Kqk'èetì ekwò herd, beginning in March 2020, with an emphasis on obtaining a sufficient number of samples and adequate spatial coverage. If in the future Tłı̨chq Government is able to collect fecal samples through community-based methods, those could be used to augment samples obtained during late-winter surveys by helicopter.

**Recommendation #15-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To ensure that both ekwò and ekwò habitat monitoring, and realistic harvesting numbers are recorded in a culturally appropriate manner, and to contribute adaptive management, TG will implement the Tłıchq Research and Monitoring Program, starting in January 2020 (See Appendix H).

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchq Government varies 'recommendation #15-2019' to say the following:

To ensure that both ekwò and ekwò habitat monitoring, and realistic harvesting numbers are recorded in a culturally appropriate manner, and to contribute to adaptive management, TG will ~~implement the Tłıchq Research and Monitoring Program, starting in January 2020 (See Appendix H).~~ **revisit the 2007 report by A. Legat titled "Tłıchq Research and Monitoring Program" for the purpose of determining whether aspects not already implemented might be useful.**

**Reasons:** Tłıchq Government repeats its answer to Recommendation #16-2019 (Sahti Ekwo) and states that the "Tłıchq Research & Monitoring Program" was considered by Tłıchq Government between 2010 and 2012 and this resulted in the creation of the Tłıchq Research and Training Institute (TRTI) or Dedats'eetsaa. Dedats'eetsaa refers to a large culturally significant rock on Tłıchq Lands where people had traditionally used to cache and retrieve materials/supplies while traveling to and from the barrens. The name was adopted for the TRTI because it signified a way of storing, retrieving and later using the Tłıchq knowledge. Dedats'eetsaa (Tlıcho Research and Training Institute) is the result of the consideration of the "Tłıchq Research & Monitoring Program". Dr. Legat's work provided a foundation to the current program (TRTI), and in the time since the creation of Dedats'eetsaa, it has evolved. Therefore, Tłıchq Government is of the view that key components of the "Tłıchq Research and Monitoring Program", have already largely been considered and are being implemented.

**Recommendation #16-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To better understand the effects of climate change on Ɂekwò, TG will systematically collect on-the-ground climate change observations including but not limited to (i) dry conditions, (ii) wildfires, and (iii) lack of vegetation, during the Ekwò Nàxoède K'è program and the Tłıchq Research and Monitoring Program. Results of the monitoring programs should be designed to contribute to an adaptive management framework and be reported to the WRRB and GNWT annually.

**Response:** VARY

Tłıchq Government varies 'recommendation #16-2019' to say the following:

To better understand the effects of climate change on ɬekwò, TG will ~~systematically~~ collect on-the-ground climate change observations ~~including but not limited to (i) dry conditions, (ii) wildfires, and (iii) lack of vegetation,~~ during the Ekwò Nàxoède K'è program ~~and the Tłıchq Research and Monitoring Program~~. Results of the monitoring programs should be designed to contribute to an adaptive management framework and be reported to the WRRB and GNWT annually.

**Reasons:** Tłıchq Government would prefer not to use the adjective "systematically", as Tłıchq harvesters will use holistic knowledge to "see" changes on the land. Tłıchq Government assume that "systematically" collecting data will be performed with technological recording devices (i.e., data loggers, temperature gauges, etc.) which is not the main emphasis of a more holistic approach based on Tłıchq knowledge. Tłıchq Government also considers that the "monitoring" of wildfires is a difficult task and thinks that remote sensing might be the most effective way to do this. Tłıchq Government will endeavour to determine how its programs might contribute to monitoring wildfires from a traditional perspective.

**Recommendation #17-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò)**

To ensure timelier implementation of management and monitoring actions, WRRB, TG and GNWT will collaborate to develop a herd-specific adaptive management framework with the thresholds linked to specific management actions by January 2020, with the WRRB taking a lead role for herds in Wek'èezhì. The framework will take into consideration Tłıchq and scientific knowledge, existing management plans, and decisions and recommendations from Boards and governments.

**Response:** ACCEPT

**Reasons:** GNWT and Tłıchq Government accept this recommendation. However, GNWT and Tłıchq Government note that this WRRB-led herd-specific adaptive management framework is slated for a completion date of January 2020 and ask if that completion date might be a matter for discussion when the three parties meet for the collaborative discussions.

**Recommendation #18-2019 (Kqk'èetì Ekwò): Implementation**

To track the progress of implementation of the Board's recommendations, TG and GNWT will provide to the WRRB the following:

- 1) An implementation plan for the 2019 recommendations by January 31, 2020
- 2) A summary report, within one year of the acceptance or variance of the Board's 2019 recommendations, on proposed management actions, including an evaluation of the success of implementation of management actions; and,
- 3) An updated implementation plan for the 2010 and 2016 recommendations and an evaluation of all outstanding recommendations by January 31, 2020.

**Response:** VARY

TG and ENR vary 'Recommendation #18-2019' to say the following:

To track the progress of implementation of the Board's recommendations, TG and GNWT will provide to the WRRB the following:

- 1) An implementation plan for the 2019 recommendations by April 30 ~~January 31~~, 2020;
- 2) A summary report, within one year of the acceptance or variance of the Board's 2019 recommendations, on proposed management actions, including an evaluation of the success of implementation of management actions; and,
- 3) An updated implementation plan for the 2010 and 2016 recommendations and an evaluation of all outstanding recommendations by ~~January 31~~ April 30, 2020.

**Reasons:** Tłıchǫ Government and the GNWT agree with the need to evaluate all of the Board's previous recommendations but the two governments need more time to give the Board the updated implementation plans.