

Proposed listing of Wolverine as a species of Special Concern under the *Species at Risk Act* (Canada)

Government of Nunavut Department of Environment submission to Nunavut Wildlife Management Board written public hearing

GN Position:

Based on a thorough review of the available information the Nunavut Department of Environment has concluded that wolverine meet the criteria to be listed nationally as a Species of Special Concern under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). This conclusion is primarily based on the status of wolverine nationally, and specifically in its southern Canadian range.

General Status:

In its southern Canadian range, wolverine population declines have been reported due to loss of habitat, habitat fragmentation, and an increase in disturbance due largely to human activities like urban sprawl, agriculture and other development activities. Nunavut represents the northeastern edge of wolverine distribution in Canada. The COSEWIC-identified threats for designation are true for most parts of the species' southern range, although the range fragmentation and habitat loss issues that affect southern populations do not affect wolverines in Nunavut.

In Nunavut wolverine densities are moderate in the west and low on the arctic islands and in the east. Inuit observations and scientific studies indicate that the wolverine population is stable or slightly increasing, and their range is expanding eastward and northward.

We have limited information on potential cumulative impacts on wolverine populations due to exploration and development. Wolverines have been attracted to food sources and finding shelter under buildings at mining/exploration sites. There is no indication that these activities are having measurable population impacts.

Wolverines are found in relatively low densities, have a low reproductive rate with low intrinsic rate of increase, are sensitive to human disturbance, and require large secure areas to maintain viable populations. The recent decline in caribou numbers in parts of wolverine range is expected to have some effect on wolverines in Nunavut, but that effect is difficult to identify or quantify.

Current Management:

Wolverines are a traditional resource harvested by Inuit. As present there is no quantitative limit on wolverine harvesting in Nunavut, but as the population is stable or increasing, the harvest is clearly sustainable. Should a need for harvest limits be

identified the department would bring a proposal forward to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board.

Management Concerns:

There has been a small increase in wolverine-human conflict associated with mineral development projects, and this can be expected to increase if development increases as expected. An assessment of wolverine densities and harvest rates through hair snagging and harvest monitoring is on-going.

Benefits of Listing:

Whether or not NWMB supports listing there will be little no impact or change in wolverine management in Nunavut. A listing of "Special Concern" does not in itself require harvest restrictions or any changes to harvesting practices. The listing would require development of a National Management Plan within 3 years, and Nunavut would participate in this process. This National Management Plan can be expected to be beneficial to the management of wolverine and to the long-term viability of the species, especially at National level.