



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: Bathurst Caribou herd population estimate from 2018 calving ground photographic survey and harvest recommendations.

Background

- The Bathurst Caribou herd is harvested by hunters in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Bathurst Inlet, and Bay Chimo).
- In the mid-1980s, close to half a million Bathurst caribou were present on their annual range. From 2006 to 2009, the herd declined drastically to about 32,000 caribou.
- In December 2010, new management regulations were adopted by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). These included the closure of outfitting and commercial harvests and a limitation on Aboriginal harvest of up to 300 caribou.
- The 2015 population estimate was 19,700 Bathurst caribou, which is significantly lower than the 2012 population estimate of 35,000 caribou. The 2015 estimate is 37% lower than the 2012 estimate with an annual decline of 14%.
- In response to the 2015 population estimate, the GNWT imposed a moratorium on hunting Bathurst caribou, while the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board set a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of 30 male caribou, for Nunavut.
- The decline is believed to be the result in part of natural cycles. Harvest pressure and disturbance due to development could exacerbate the decline, and impact recovery of the Bathurst caribou herd.

Current Status

- Since 2017, the Department of Environment (DOE) has been an active participant in coordinating, developing, and providing technical support to an inter-jurisdictional (Nunavut and Northwest Territories) management plan for the Bathurst Caribou herd.
- The 2018 photo population estimate primary results suggest a further decline of the Bathurst herd, to approximately 8,210 animals. This is significantly lower than the 2015 population estimate of 19,700 caribou.

- For the 2018-2019 harvest season, the TAH allocation was decided as follows: 20 tags for the sport hunts from Bay Chimo (Umingmaktok) and Bathurst Inlet Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) and the remaining 10 tags were allocated to local hunters in Kugluktuk.
- According to the Kugluktuk HTO by-laws, their allocation (10 tags) is to be used for subsistence only (cannot be used for sport hunting) and these tags were further allocated equally between the Kuodluak family (5 tags) and the Himiak family (5 tags) that live around Contwoyto Lake.
- The DOE continues to work closely with the affected communities of Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Bay Chimo (Umingmaktok) and Bathurst Inlet, and co-management partners including Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), HTOs, and the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board to identify appropriate management actions.

Consultations

- The results of surveys were communicated to co-management partners and HTOs during a consultation on October 7, 2019, in Cambridge Bay. Representatives from the HTOs of Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Bay Chimo, and Bathurst Inlet were present at the consultations, along with NTI.
- At the consultation on October 7, the DOE indicated a recommended moratorium on the harvest of Bathurst caribou. It was stated by HTO members at the consultation that a moratorium on the Bathurst caribou herd would have negative impacts on food security, as well as economical, and cultural implications for the communities who harvest Bathurst caribou. The communities expressed strongly that they want additional management recommendations to be considered such as predator control with higher incentives.

Recommendation

- The Department of Environment recommends to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board a TAH of 0 for the Bathurst Caribou herd.