

Caribou Management Plan for Bluenose East caribou in the Kitikmeot Region (Bluenose East Caribou Management Plan) is approved and implemented pursuant to Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Sections 5.2.34(d)(i) and 5.3.7 to 5.3.15;

2. Direct that the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board – pursuant to Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Subsection 5.7.6(d), in compliance with the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Section 5.1.5 principles of conservation, and in consultation with the Government of Nunavut - Department of Environment and affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations, with assistance from relevant Qaujimaniliit – promptly determine, on the same interim basis as for the total allowable harvest, the sex ratio of the harvest;
3. Recommend that the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, Government of Nunavut - Department of Environment and affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations, with assistance – as deemed necessary or advisable – from other qualified organizations and/or relevant Qaujimaniliit, complete the development of the draft Bluenose East Caribou Management Plan – including careful consideration of a potential predator control program – by no later than the end of September 2017; and
4. Upon submission of the completed draft Bluenose East Caribou Management Plan for approval by the NWMB pursuant to Nunavut Land Claims Agreement Sections 5.2.34(d)(i) and 5.3.3, promptly hold a public hearing in the Kitikmeot Region – ideally in the community of Kugluktuk – in order to make a decision or decisions concerning the ongoing harvest management regime for the Bluenose East caribou herd in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

2. Main points of agreement and disagreement among hearing parties²

In making the above decisions, the NWMB noted the following points of agreement and disagreement among parties at the public hearing:

a. Main points of agreement among hearing parties

- Caribou herds tend to undergo natural population cycles, featuring periods of abundance and periods of decline.
- The Bluenose-East caribou herd is experiencing a decline, there is an urgent conservation concern, and management action is needed to support the herd's recovery.
- If a total allowable harvest is established, the full allocation should go to Inuit.

² Please note that these points of agreement and disagreement were compiled during the course of the oral hearing process. However, they were not presented to the hearing parties, either during or following the hearing, for their consideration and response. Accordingly, the NWMB relied upon written and oral hearing submissions to support these points.

- A low total allowable harvest will limit opportunities for Inuit to teach younger generations about hunting, harvesting practices, and traditional ways of life and will have a serious impact on their communities.
- Community-based management initiatives, such as the development of a management plan, are a positive step for the herd's recovery.
- Enforcement of a total allowable harvest in areas where multiple caribou herds interact will be challenging.
- Protecting the herd requires collaboration between governments, communities, and other management authorities.
- Predators such as wolves and bears are an important cause of caribou mortality.

b. Main points of disagreement among hearing parties

- A total allowable harvest is necessary to address the herd's decline, in part by restricting resident non-beneficiary harvest.
- Community-based management could be an effective alternative to a government-enforced total allowable harvest in addressing the decline.
- Hunters and Trappers Organizations have the enforcement capacity to ensure compliance with measures associated with community-based management plans (for example, a harvest limit or sex restrictions).
- Implementing a total allowable harvest would remove harvest management powers from Hunters and Trappers Organizations and place all control with government.
- Predator control measures would be a useful and feasible herd recovery strategy.
- A males-only harvest will benefit the herd's recovery.
- Switching of harvest pressure from the Bathurst caribou herd to Bluenose-East in the Northwest Territories may be a factor in its decline.

3. Rationale for the NWMB's decisions

a. NWMB's Interim total allowable harvest decision

In its decision-making, the NWMB carefully considered the best available scientific information and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The Board noted that the Bluenose-East caribou herd is experiencing an ongoing, severe population decline, as indicated by the results of the Government of Northwest Territories – Environment and Natural Resources spring 2015 population survey. During the public hearing, all parties agreed that the herd is experiencing a decline, although not all parties agreed on the severity of the trend. The Board determined that in this circumstance, a total allowable harvest is necessary to manage harvest and ensure the best chance for the herd's recovery. The hearing parties representing the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization, members of which comprise the majority of Bluenose-East caribou harvesters in Nunavut, proposed a community-enforced overall annual harvest limit of 340 caribou, matching the recommended total allowable harvest proposed by the Government of Nunavut. Thus, the Board determined that 340 is an appropriate harvest level to support both the herd's recovery and community needs.

The Board also determined that an interim total allowable harvest will allow additional consideration of harvest management for the herd when the affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations have completed the development of their community-based management plan. Many parties at the hearing expressed concern that establishing a total allowable harvest will impede the community-based caribou management measures of the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization, as exercised under *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Article 5.7.3,³ and would place control over harvesting activities with the Government of Nunavut. The NWMB decided that, while the urgent conservation concern necessitates a prompt management response (total allowable harvest), the community-based management plan development process of the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization could result in a compelling alternative management response and should be given full Board consideration when completed. As such, the Board determined that an interim total allowable harvest will be the best way to address the conservation concern while supporting community-based management.

b. Sex ratio decision

In addition to a total allowable harvest of 340 caribou, the Government of Nunavut's *Proposal for NWMB Decision* recommended a males-only harvest non-quota limitation. During the public hearing, participating Hunters and Trappers Organizations and Qaujimaniliit were not supportive of the proposed non-quota limitation. The Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization's draft "Integrated Community Caribou Plan" includes a range of other non-quota limitations, including seasonal restrictions in specific areas near Kugluktuk, but does not include sex-based restrictions. The Board noted during its decision-making session that, due to Kugluktuk's proximity to the Bluenose-East caribou calving ground, Kugluktuk harvesters tend to harvest cows in the spring and bulls in the fall; as a result, seasonal restrictions such as those proposed by the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization could have a similar effect to sex-based restrictions. In light of this information, and considering the opposition to the males-only non-quota limitation expressed by multiple hearing parties, the Board decided that the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board should work with affected communities and other co-management partners, including the Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment, to determine an appropriate sex ratio for the interim total allowable harvest that will be acceptable to Kugluktuk while minimizing the overall impact of harvesting to the herd.

c. Bluenose-East Caribou Management Plan decisions

The NWMB encourages community-based management initiatives and recognizes that the creation of the "Integrated Community Caribou Plan" (Kugluktuk's community-based management plan for Bluenose-East caribou) represents an opportunity for increased collaboration in wildlife management in Nunavut. The quality and level of detail in the draft

³ *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Article 5.7.3 describes the authorities of Hunters and Trappers Organizations as follows: "The powers and functions of HTOs shall include the following: (a) the regulation of harvesting practices and techniques among members, including the use of non-quota limitations; (b) the allocation and enforcement of community basic needs levels and adjusted basic needs levels among members; (c) the assignment to non-members, including with or without valuable consideration and conditions, of any portion of community basic needs levels and adjusted basic needs levels; and (d) generally, the management of harvesting among members."

plan suggests that the finished product will merit full consideration by the NWMB as a viable method for Bluenose-East caribou harvest management. The Board looks forward to receiving the completed "Integrated Community Caribou Plan" by the end of September 2017.

d. NWMB's recommendations to co-management partners

While the NWMB recognizes that it does not have the authority to direct the activities of co-management partners, the Board's resolution includes several recommendations to the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment, and affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations. Upon completion of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process, the NWMB will promptly issue follow-up correspondence to the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board and other co-management partners regarding these recommendations, especially regarding the determination of the sex-ratio for the interim total allowable harvest within a recommended time frame of two months.

4. Conclusion

As per Section 5.3.8 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, the NWMB is hereby forwarding its decisions concerning the harvest management of Bluenose-East caribou to you for your review and consideration. The NWMB recognizes the importance of this decision to stakeholders across the entire range of Bluenose-East caribou and looks forward to your prompt reply and the timely completion of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process.

Should you or your officials have any questions or concerns regarding the contents of this letter, please contact the NWMB.

Sincerely,



Daniel Shewchuk
Acting Chairperson of the
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Attached: Summary of public hearing party positions and arguments.

C.C. Ron Elliot, Executive Assistant to Honourable Joe Savikataaq, Government of Nunavut
Drikus Gissing, Director of Wildlife Management, Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment

Appendix 1 – Summary of Bluenose-East caribou harvest management public hearing party positions and arguments

Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment

Position: Supports establishing a total allowable harvest of 340 caribou, with a non-quota limitation of a bulls-only harvest. (Department of Environment written submission, p. 3)

Evidence/Arguments:

- The most recent population estimate of 38,592 caribou, based on the 2015 aerial survey, indicates a significant decline from the previous estimate of 68,000 caribou in 2013, with an estimated annual rate of decline of 21% (Department of Environment written submission, p. 2).
- Additional observations have also indicated that the adult female survival rate and calf-cow ratios are below what is required for the herd to recover, suggesting that the population decline is continuing (Department of Environment written submission, p. 2).
- Department of Environment representatives have shared information about the herd's population trend since 2009 and are aware of community-based management actions that have taken place in Kugluktuk since then (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 11 lines 1-8).
- The Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management has listed the herd as being in the "orange" zone, meaning it is at an intermediate population size with a decreasing trend, and recommends a harvest rate of 2.5% for herds in this zone, or a total harvest of 950 by all harvesters, from both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Nunavut's proportion of the harvest has historically represented 36% of the total harvest from the herd, which would be 340 caribou with an overall harvest of 950 across all harvesters (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 13-15).
- Targeting bulls only may help females to produce more calves and assist the herd's recovery (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 15 lines 10-21).

Government of Northwest Territories – Environment and Natural Resources

Position: Supports establishing a total allowable harvest of 340 caribou, with a non-quota limitation of a bulls-only harvest (Bluenose-East Public Hearing Transcript, p. 154 lines 1-8).

Evidence/Arguments:

- The herd has declined from 100,000 adult caribou in 2010 to the current estimate of 68,000, with an estimated annual rate of decline of 29%, indicating a serious conservation concern (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 131 lines 14-22).
- The herd seems likely to decline further based on poor vital rates (cow survival rate, calf survival rate, and pregnancy rate are all estimated to be below the levels

associated with stable herds) (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 134 lines 1-9).

- Survey results and collar data suggest that the decline is not the result of caribou switching to different herds or calving areas (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 134 lines 10-17).
- The total allowable harvest is consistent with the Government of Northwest Territories recommendation of an overall harvest of 950 and proposed allocation between all users, based on the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management's "Taking Care of Caribou" management plan recommendations for a herd in the orange zone (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 140-141).
- Aboriginal harvester groups and Nunavut harvesters have attended meetings with the Government of Northwest Territories in the past and have generally agreed to their proposed allocation, which includes 340 caribou allocated to Nunavut harvesters (Bluenose-East Public Hearing Transcript, p. 154 lines 9-13).
- Harvesting cows will likely accelerate the decline of the herd, as was understood to be the case for the Bathurst herd (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 151 lines 2-8).

Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board

Position: Supports harvest management implemented through an HTO-led management plan, as opposed to a total allowable harvest (Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board written submission, p. 1).

Evidence/Arguments:

- The Department of Environment has not taken the affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations' harvest management efforts, including the development of a community-based management plan, into account (Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board written submission, p. 1).

Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association

Position: Supports harvest management implemented through an HTO-led management plan, as opposed to a total allowable harvest (Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association written submission, p. 1).

Evidence/Arguments:

- A Government of Nunavut-enforced total allowable harvest should be used as a last resort for the herd's recovery (Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association written submission, p. 1).
- The Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization has the authority to implement its own community-based management measures under *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Section 5.7.3, and intends to use this authority to implement community-

based wildlife management initiatives, including a management plan and predator harvest (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 308-309).

- Since 2009, Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization has stopped sport hunts and commercial and community caribou harvests (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 542 lines 21-24).
- Enforcement of locally-developed management actions by local residents will be more effective than government-enforced harvest management. (Kugluktuk Agoniatit Association written submission, p. 2).
- The estimated harvest of Bluenose-East caribou from May 2015-May 2016 by Kugluktuk harvesters is 190 caribou, and the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization is willing to enforce a harvest limit of 340 caribou using its own management mechanisms (Kugluktuk Agoniatit Association written submission, p. 3).
- The Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization has had success in the past in ensuring community compliance with its decisions (Kugluktuk Agoniatit Association written submission, p. 5-6).
- A government-enforced total allowable harvest may negatively impact Inuit hunters by exposing them to legal prosecution for accidental or unavoidable harvesting activities (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing, p. 336 lines 1-21).

Bathurst Inlet (Burnside) Hunters and Trappers Organization

Position: Supports harvest management implemented through an HTO-led management plan, as opposed to a total allowable harvest, as proposed by the Kugluktuk Agoniatit Association (Bluenose-East Public Hearing Transcript, p. 354 lines 16-24).

Bay Chimo (Umingmaktok) Hunters and Trappers Organization

Position: Supports harvest management implemented through an HTO-led management plan, as opposed to a total allowable harvest, as proposed by the Kugluktuk Agoniatit Association (Bluenose-East Public Hearing Transcript, p. 356 lines 16-23).

Ekaluktutiak Hunters and Trappers Organization

Position: Supports harvest management implemented through an HTO-led management plan, as opposed to a total allowable harvest (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 336-337).

Evidence/Arguments:

- A government-enforced total allowable harvest may negatively impact Inuit hunters by exposing them to legal prosecution for accidental or unavoidable harvesting activities (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing, p. 336 lines 1-21).

Qaujimaniliit

Position: Do not support a bulls-only harvest (Public Hearing Transcript, p. 427 lines 3-16); support predator (wolf and grizzly bear) management (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 425-426).

Evidence/Arguments:

- Bulls are the main breeders, and are susceptible to predators during the breeding season (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p.426-427).
- Predators have a significant impact on the herd. Elders have observed wolves hunting and killing caribou to check the health of the animal without consuming the carcass (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 395-396).
- In the past, Inuit hunters successfully managed predator populations by harvesting them (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 431 lines 4-6).

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated

Position: Supports (1) allocating the full amount of any total allowable harvest to Inuit (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Letter to NWMB, April 8, 2016); and (2) involving affected communities in the development and implementation of harvest management actions (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 441 lines 3-5).

Evidence/Arguments:

- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated's support for the NWMB's decision to postpone striking a basic needs level when establishing total allowable harvest levels for caribou is based on the expectation that all total allowable harvest would be reserved for Inuit in the interim (Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated Letter to NWMB, April 8, 2016).
- Communities are unlikely to be supportive of management approaches if they have not been included in the planning process (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 418).

Kitikmeot Inuit Association

Position: Supports (1) community-based management instead of a total allowable harvest (Public Hearing Transcript, p. 461 lines 2-19) and (2) mobile caribou protection measures (Kitikmeot Inuit Association written submission – Request for Adjournment, p. 2).

Evidence/Arguments:

- There is a conservation concern for the Bluenose-East caribou herd (Bluenose-East Public Hearing Transcript, p. 432 lines 6-8).
- Establishing a total allowable harvest transfers control of harvest management from Inuit, as represented by Hunters and Trappers Organizations, to government (Kitikmeot Inuit Association written submission, p. 3).

- The Department of Environment did not attempt to work with the affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations to establish management approaches under *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Section 5.7.3, or consider alternative responses to the herd's decline, prior to recommending a total allowable harvest to the NWMB (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 461 lines 7-14).
- There is a precedent for community-based management plans as an alternative to a total allowable harvest, as demonstrated by "Caribou for All Time: A Délı̄në Plan of Action", released on January 8, 2016 by the community of Délı̄në to guide management of Bluenose-East caribou (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 462 lines 4-13).¹
- There is a strong commitment from the west Kitikmeot Hunters and Trappers Organizations to develop and implement community-led management tools for Bathurst caribou as an alternative to a government-implemented and enforced total allowable harvest (Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 468 lines 1-10).
- Caribou calving grounds shift unpredictably and mobile protection measures are more flexible and responsive than designated protected areas (Kitikmeot Inuit Association written submission – Request for Adjournment, Annex 2).
- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit supports a mixed-sex harvest rather than a bulls-only harvest (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 446 lines 5-9).

North Slave Métis Alliance

Position: Supports harvest management implemented through an HTO-led management plan (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 362 lines 1-6).

Evidence/Arguments:

- The Bluenose-East caribou population is in a period of serious decline (North Slave Metis Alliance written submission, p. 3).
- A harvest limit of 340 caribou, as proposed in the Kugluktuk's Hunters and Trappers Organization's draft Bluenose-East management plan, complements ongoing management initiatives in the Northwest Territories, including the establishment of harvest limits (North Slave Metis Alliance written submission, p. 3).
- Community-based management is preferable to government-led and enforced management whenever possible (Bluenose-East Public Hearing Transcript, p. 363 lines 15-18).

¹The Government of Northwest Territories is currently in the process of establishing a total allowable harvest for Bluenose-East caribou in the Northwest Territories. During the NWMB Bathurst caribou hearing, the Government of Northwest Territories – Director of Wildlife explained that the Délı̄në plan was not intended to be an alternative to a total allowable harvest; instead, it complements the overall total allowable harvest and assists Délı̄në in managing its allocation of Bluenose-East caribou (See Bathurst Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 502-504).

- A bulls-only harvest will maximize the herd's chances of recovery (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing, p. 362-363).

Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board

Position: Supports management actions that will protect the herd to enable future recovery (Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board written submission, p. 3).

Evidence/Arguments:

- The Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board recently concluded its own hearing process to consider establishing a total allowable harvest of 950, and other harvest management actions, for the Bluenose-East caribou herd within the Northwest Territories (Bluenose-East Caribou Public Hearing Transcript, p. 457 lines 10-16).
- Given the serious conservation concern with Bluenose-East caribou, all harvester groups must take any possible action to protect the herd (Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board written submission, p. 3.).

Public written submission – Inuvialuit Game Council

Position: Support a total allowable harvest of 332, or 35% of the total harvest from the herd overall, and harvest reporting. (Inuvialuit Game Council/Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories) joint written submission, p. 1).

Evidence/Arguments:

- The Government of Northwest Territories – Environment and Natural Resources did not consult with Inuvialuit prior to establishing the interim harvest allocation for the Bluenose-East herd that subsequently became the basis for the current proposed harvest allocation, including 36% for Nunavut harvesters (Inuvialuit Game Council/Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories) joint written submission, p. 1).
- At the January 20, 2016 meeting of Bluenose-East caribou harvester groups to discuss harvest allocation, most of the user groups at the meeting supported a proposal from the Inuvialuit Game Council to establish a minimum allocation of 2% of the total allowable harvest for each harvester group, which would reduce Nunavut's potential allocation to 35%, or 332 caribou out of a total harvest of 950 (Inuvialuit Game Council/Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories) joint written submission, p. 2).

Public written submission – Tłįchq Government

Position: Supports establishing a total allowable harvest of 340 caribou (Tłįchq Government written submission, p. 1).

Evidence/Arguments:

- Tłıchǫ people have reduced their harvest of Bluenose-East caribou in recent years in response to the decline and support collaborative action across all user groups (Tłıchǫ Government written submission, p. 1).

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