



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: The Qamanirjuaq Mainland Migratory Barren-Ground Caribou Subpopulation Status.

Background:

The Qamanirjuaq Caribou population is the largest caribou herd in Nunavut and second largest in Canada (Figure 1). Exploration and mining activities on the calving ground coupled with higher than normal harvest rates is of great concern to Nunavut communities and the Government of Nunavut, and threaten the subsistence and traditional practices of Inuit across the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, as well as northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the NWT all whom rely on this population for subsistence.

In June of 2008, the Department of Environment completed a comprehensive wildlife survey of the Qamanirjuaq Caribou estimating the population at 348,000 Caribou. The June 2008 estimate was below the June 1994 estimate of 496,000 caribou (Figure 2). A more recent reconnaissance survey in June of 2012 indicates that the herd may have declined significantly between June 2008 and June 2012. These results coupled with wide spread hoof rot within the population the winter of 2011 has biologists, the BQCMB (Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board) and some Kivalliq HTOs concerned for the future of the Qamanirjuaq Herd.

Current Status

An analysis of the most current Qamanirjuaq Reconnaissance Survey data is ongoing, but early results suggest the Qamanirjuaq caribou population may have declined to half of the 2008 June population estimate. The Department of Environment has informed all Kivalliq HTOs of the suspected decline in Qamanirjuaq caribou abundance.

Because of increased demand for caribou meat within Nunavut, commercial meat sales, as well as sales of caribou meat by local hunters, have increased dramatically. Within the territory meat sales have been further accelerated due to internet-based meat sales going largely to Baffin communities and broad shipping subsidies for country food put in place by local airlines.

Communities have expressed concern over the increased harvest for internet trade and sale of caribou meat to other regions, and there is concern that the population cannot sustain the current level of harvesting pressure.

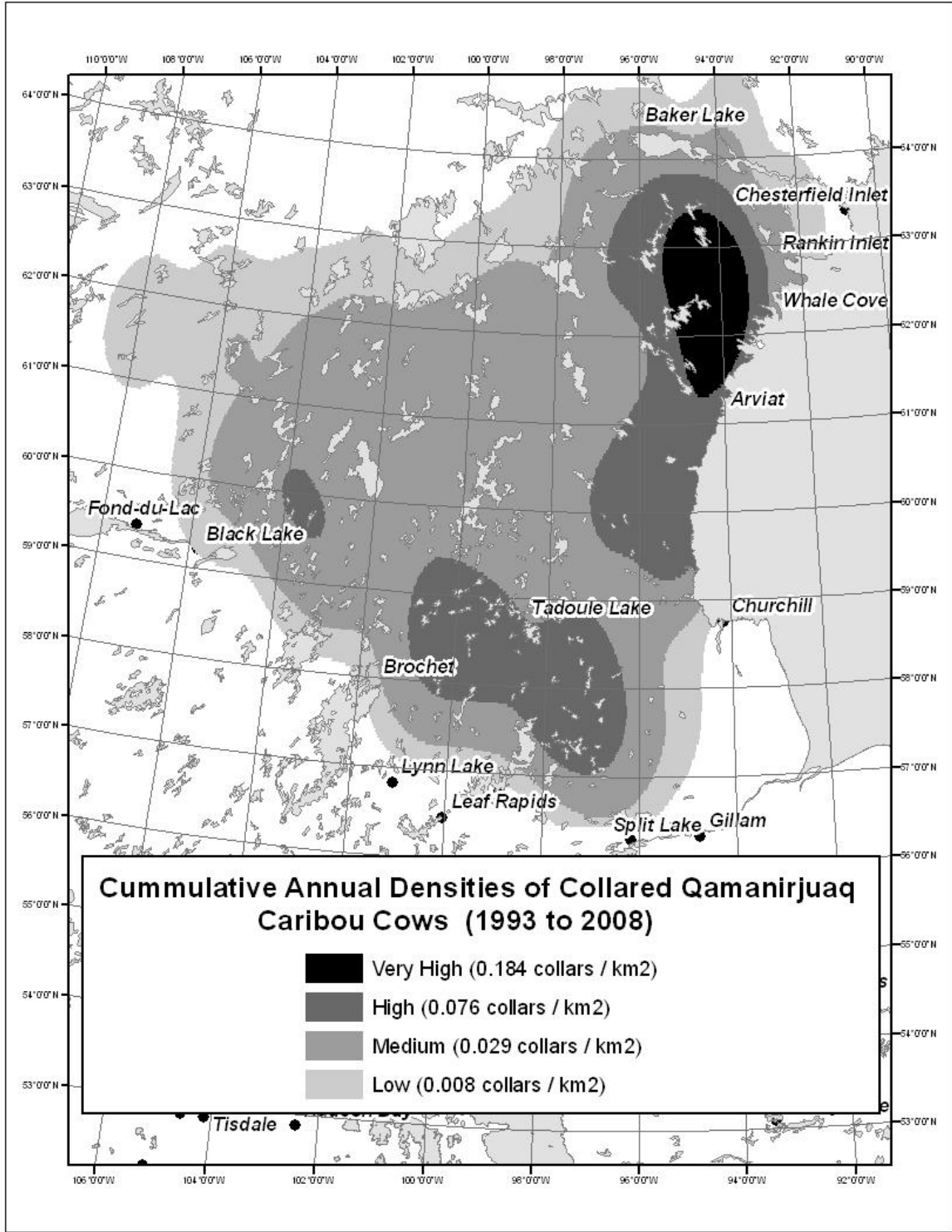


Figure 1 The range extents and annual densities of the Qamanirjuaq barren-ground caribou herd. Range extents were calculated using a kernel analysis of satellite and GPS collar data collected between November 1993 and April 2008.

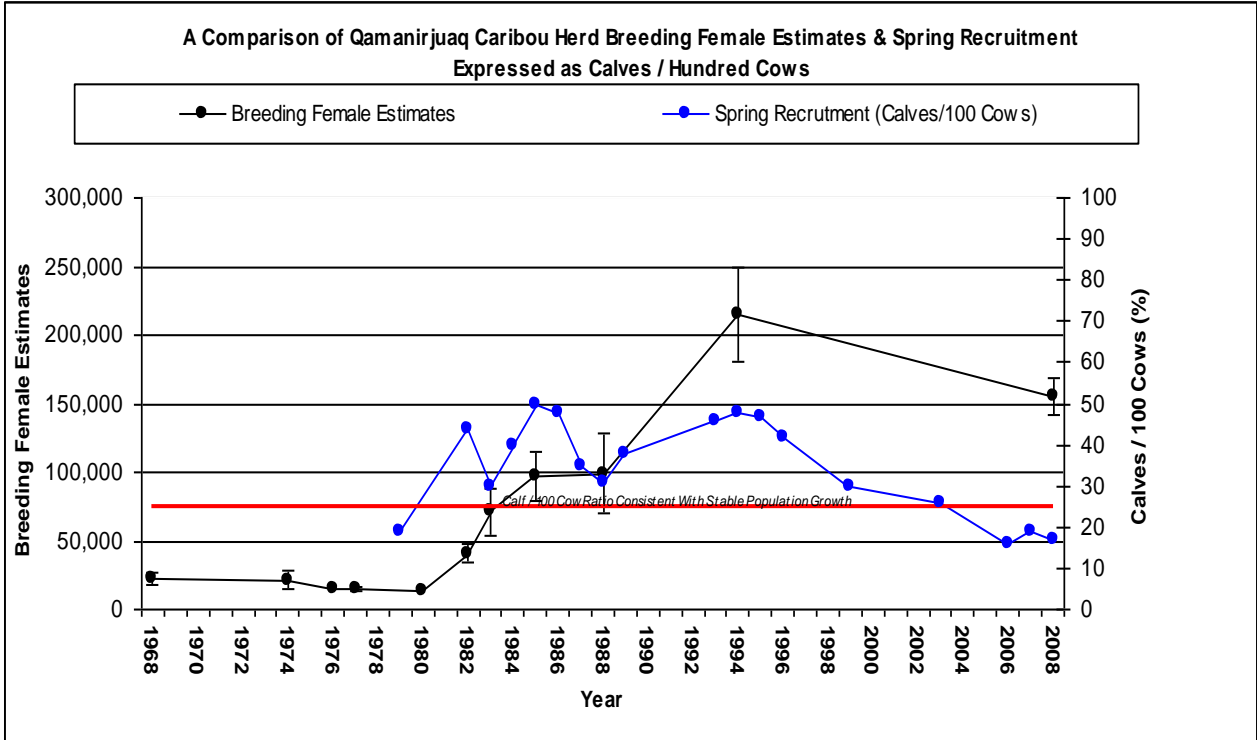


Figure 2 A comparison of Qamanirjuaq caribou herd spring calf recruitment results expressed as calves / hundred cows, with breeding female estimates, June 1979 through 2008.

Management Considerations

A population estimate of the Qamanirjuaq Caribou Population will be required at the earliest possible date so that this indicated decline can be substantiated.

The Government of Nunavut will continue to consult and work with our co-management partners to address inter-settlement trade from this herd and to try and find ways to collectively address on-going herd management.