



**SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Baffin Island Caribou Workshop Report and Update (August 2013)

TITLE: Baffin Island Caribou

ISSUE: Inuit knowledge and scientific information indicate that the number of caribou on Baffin Island is very low, and that there is a conservation concern.

CO-MANAGEMENT NEED: The apparent decline in Baffin Island caribou warrants immediate co-management action, as per the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA).

CARIBOU WORKSHOP SUMMARY POINTS:

- Caribou are an extremely valuable resource to Nunavummiut, for both preferred food and clothing.
- Baffin Island caribou are used by all ten communities on Baffin Island, representing 60% of all Nunavummiut.
- Social science research and Inuit knowledge collected through HTO and community consultations highlighted community concern for caribou, difficulties locating caribou, and recent year declines in caribou numbers and distribution.
- An aerial survey of South Baffin Island was conducted in 2012 to determine caribou abundance and distribution using distance sampling techniques.
- Survey findings provided an abundance density of 5.3 caribou per 1,000 square kilometers, or under 5,000 caribou on South Baffin Island, the most populated area for caribou on Baffin Island. This low abundance indicates a caribou decline of more than 90% since the 1990s, when previous abundance estimates were in the 60,000 to 180,000 range.
- There is a conservation and management concern due to caribou declines.
- Environmental conditions, changing climate (freezing events), mineral exploration, development and disturbance of critical habitat, natural long-term cyclical population trends, and harvest exploitation contribute to the current declines.
- The Baffin Island Caribou Workshop brought some 60 co-management partners together to develop a conservation strategy for Baffin Island Caribou.

CURRENT STATUS:

- Co-management partners are working together following a Baffin Island Caribou Workshop in July 2013 (Department of Environment, Government of Nunavut, community Hunters and Trappers Organizations, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Elders Advisory Committee and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.). The workshop was designed to support co-management partners working together towards solutions based on Inuit traditional practices for managing harvest in times of scarcity and addressing the immediate conservation needs of Baffin Island caribou.
- Social Science research (2013), community consultation reports (2011, 2012), and aerial survey abundance assessment results (2012) were presented at the Workshop.
- A survey design is being planned and developed for ongoing population monitoring, incorporating input from co-management partners and workshop proceedings. Community-based ground surveys by Inuit will be an important component of the survey design.
- A significant outcome of the Caribou Workshop was community-based co-management whereby HTOs and communities assert their co-management authority under the NLCA and initiate community-compliant rules or bylaws for caribou management of their own initiative, *as soon as possible*;
- Potential management actions for community consideration might include: bull harvest only with zero harvest of females, protection of calving grounds, other community-based harvest restrictions, the exclusion of important areas from harvesting and mineral development, establishment of TAH and non-quota limitations, and development of management and monitoring plans.
- A Management Plan and co-management process has commenced and will proceed with community consultations in the fall, 2013, with a final Baffin Island Caribou Management Plan targeted for late 2014.

BACKGROUND:

- Since the mid-1990s, local communities and hunters have reported low caribou numbers across northern Baffin Island and more recently, across the entire island.
- Due to the low caribou numbers, residents on Baffin Island were buying caribou from Southampton Island in an effort to supplement their traditional food supply. This practice has been largely curtailed as a result of the imposition of a

Total Allowable Harvest limitation of 1000 animals per year on Southampton Island (July 1, 2012).

NEXT STEPS:

- A bilingual, interactive DVD containing a narrated presentation about the South Baffin Caribou survey is available to Baffin region HTOs and communities for viewing, along with a Caribou Workshop Report which will be distributed to co-management partners and Workshop participants (HTOs) in Baffin Island communities; it will also be available on the DoE web-site.
- DOE is submitting an information item and the Caribou Workshop Report to the NWMB for review during its next regular meeting.
- Following the co-management workshop, community consultations will proceed in the fall, 2013.
- HTOs and communities are urged to take immediate interim management action to conserve Baffin Island caribou through community and HTO by-laws, as an outcome of the Workshop.
- A Baffin Island Caribou Management Plan is in development for late 2014.