



**SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Baffin Island Caribou Post-Workshop Update (February 2014)

TITLE: Community Consultations regarding Baffin Island Caribou – Status Up-date

ISSUE: The number of caribou across Baffin Island has declined drastically since the early 2000's raising concern in the communities and with the Department.

CO-MANAGEMENT NEED: The Department is concerned about the low number of caribou and is working closely with co-management partners to address this conservation concern.

CARIBOU CONSULTATION SUMMARY POINTS:

- Harvesters, Elders and community members have told us that caribou are becoming increasingly difficult to find, and have also expressed concerns about the negative impacts of land use, changing climate and icing events, disease and health monitoring concerns and other factors on caribou and their habitat.
- Participants at the July 2013 Caribou Workshop identified a community-based approach that supports Inuit self-management as the preferred system for caribou management on Baffin Island. Under this system, local Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) will work with community members to establish community restrictions and management actions through bylaws, in partnership with various wildlife co-management partners, including the Government of Nunavut.
- The Department is committed to working with all co-management partners to promote the recovery of caribou on Baffin Island.
- The Department of Environment, together with QWB, NTI, and NWMB, have recently completed community consultations across Baffin Island and the communities of Hall Beach and Igloolik, which also hunt on the Island. The purpose of these consultations was to:
 - Share information from the July Caribou Workshop and previous research on Baffin Island Caribou.

- Discuss actions that could be taken by the HTOs and community members to conserve caribou and encourage their return in higher numbers.
 - Start discussion on a longer term, Baffin-wide management plan for caribou.
 - Discuss plans for an aerial survey of the entire island to be conducted by DOE starting in March, and obtain expert hunter knowledge to help design the survey.
- Every HTO and over 380 community members attended the meetings across Baffin Island (December – January, 2013 – 2014). These included hunters, interested community members and elders.
- HTOs that we met with during the consultation tour have agreed to give further consideration to the types of management actions that are necessary, either at the community level or island-wide. Some of the potential actions that were mentioned during the consultations included:
 - Limit/regulate the sale of caribou meat.
 - Restrict harvest of females during calving and post calving, pregnant females, females accompanying calves, and calves.
 - Establish limits on the number of caribou harvested per household.
 - Only take one or two caribou from a group and leave the rest.
 - Bull-only harvest.
 - Introduce a bounty for harvesting wolves.
 - Eliminate the commercial harvest.
 - Harvest Reporting – utilize Conservation Officers to provide information on harvesting activities in their community, or the use of hunter booklets to record harvest and observations of disease.
 - Tag System (TAH).
- While not mentioned regularly, moratorium was also suggested by HTO members as a management action to speed up the recovery of caribou (2 meeting mentions).

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.

- In response to feedback provided by participants at the July 2013 Caribou Workshop in Iqaluit, the Department of Environment has proposed a new aerial survey for the entire Baffin Island. The purpose is to estimate the abundance and late winter distribution of caribou across Baffin Island.
- This survey is proposed to commence the last week of February and continue into March, 2014. It will start in the south and work north. With exceptional weather, the survey could be completed in 2 weeks.
- The method proposed is a stratified random transect aerial survey technique utilizing a double observer platform. Three fixed-wing aircraft and one rotary-wing aircraft will be used. Transect width will vary from 7 to 8 to 10 km. apart for high, medium and low density areas, respectively, for caribou as identified by community hunters.
- This project requires a large amount of community involvement and will actively engage HTOs and community members in the survey effort while incorporating IQ and provide community benefits such as training and employment to local Inuit.
- During recent Community and HTO consultation meetings, Inuit hunters provided valuable and extensive input and advice into the survey design and its implementation.
- In addition, community members will participate in the survey as Wildlife Observers' in all aircraft, conduct ground surveys to inform aerial survey coverage, and provide ongoing logistical support and advice throughout the project.
- Support for the survey was unanimous.

BACKGROUND:

- 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.

- Anecdotal reports by Inuit to biologists have suggested that more than 100,000 caribou inhabited Baffin Island in 1985. The estimate was updated in 1991 when it was suggested that South Baffin caribou were stable at 60,000 -180,000, Northeastern Baffin caribou were about 10,000 in number, and North Baffin caribou numbered 50,000 -150,000 (Ferguson and Gauthier 1992).
- 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 low caribou numbers.
- A Baffin Island Caribou Co-management Steering Committee was formed in spring 2013. It is comprised of representatives from the Government of Nunavut's Department of Environment, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc..
- A meeting of the Elders' Advisory Committee was also held last spring (2013) to discuss this issue. At that time DOE sought the Committee's input on traditional knowledge with respect to managing caribou and harvesting in times of scarcity and for any other knowledge that could provide guidance on the situation. The Elders provided valuable information and advice. For example, they stated the caribou do have a cycle of reducing in numbers and increasing in numbers again. They said it is important to begin planning now to make sure the caribou come back and that harvest controls should be put in place to keep them from depleting, especially given the improvements in hunting techniques/ efficiency in modern years. The Committee also stated that they would like to see caribou surveys done in all regions, not just in the Baffin region.
- The Steering Committee organized a workshop funded by the Department entitled *Working Together for Caribou* last July, 2013. It brought together more than 60 representatives from the Baffin HTOs, the department and invited speakers and elders to:
 - *Share Inuit and scientific knowledge about Baffin Island Caribou*
 - *Share knowledge on traditional community-based practices for managing harvesting in challenging times and share/discuss successes and challenges from other regions (e.g. Peary Caribou HTO and community hunting moratorium around Grise Fiord; Southampton Island HTO Total*

Allowable Harvest controls and enforceability with GN Conservation Officers)

- *Address key stewardship and caribou management questions for Baffin Island*
 - *Identify conservation measures to be taken by individuals, communities and management authorities*
 - *Work together to come up with recommendations for management action.*
- The Baffin Island Caribou Workshop brought some 60 co-management partners together to develop a conservation strategy for Baffin Island Caribou.
 - *Workshop participants identified a community-based approach that supports Inuit self-management as the preferred system for caribou management on Baffin Island.* Under this system, local Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) will work with community members to establish community restrictions and management actions, in partnership with various wildlife co-management partners, including the Government of Nunavut.
 - The participants recognized their responsibility to share with their community members the information they received during the workshop so that the communities can be informed and participate in the decision-making processes concerning their caribou. They agreed that the information shared at the workshop should form a starting point for a management planning framework and that there should be community consultations beginning in fall 2013.
 - As of February 5th, 2014 consultations have been held in the communities of Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Pangnirtung, Qikiqtarjuaq, Clyde River, Pond Inlet, Arctic Bay, Igloolik, Hall Beach, and Kimmirut, including both HTO and public meetings in each community.

NEXT STEPS:

- HTOs are continuing discussions within their community as to what types of management actions they can consider. However, most have deferred action until the results of the upcoming Baffin Island Caribou Survey (to be conducted in March 2014) are released. The information provided by this survey will help further inform the HTOs and community members as to what management actions may be needed.
- The Department of Environment will conduct a Baffin-wide aerial survey, also supported by HTO-led ground surveys, to estimate the abundance and late winter

distribution of caribou on Baffin Island. Survey activities are scheduled to begin in late February and continue into March, 2014.

- A workshop will be organized following the above-noted 2014 aerial survey to share the knowledge gained from the surveys and discuss both community management actions and plans, and an island-wide caribou management plan. This may be held in conjunction with a wildlife board meeting in order to reduce the costs and travel requirements. It could occur in summer 2014.