



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Draft Baffin Island Caribou Management Plan

Background:

Based on a Department of Environment (DOE) aerial survey of the Baffin Island caribou range in March 2014, we estimate there were 4,652 caribou on Baffin Island (3,462-6,250 95% CI). This corresponds to a population decline of more than 95% relative to the 1991 qualitative estimates based on IQ and limited reconnaissance observations.

Although the current decline is a result of many factors including broad, cyclical natural fluctuation, we believe overharvesting when there are so few animals may lead to further decline and possibly even extirpation of this population. A sustainable harvest level for barren-ground caribou is between 1-3% (males only) depending on whether the population is stable or increasing. This corresponds to between 47-140 caribou. (Since each female harvested is equivalent to approximately three males, a sustainable mixed harvest would need to be correspondingly lower.)

Table 1. Minimum confirmed harvest (April-December 2014) based on incomplete and anecdotal word of mouth.

Community	Confirmed Harvest
<i>Arctic Bay</i>	0
<i>Pond Inlet</i>	13
<i>Clyde River</i>	22
<i>Qikiqtarjuaq</i>	12
<i>Pangnirtung</i>	23
<i>Iqaluit</i>	25
<i>Kimmitut</i>	3
<i>Cape Dorset</i>	11
Total	109

There has been ongoing and significant harvest since the aerial survey which has likely caused the population to decline further. Based on very anecdotal and incomplete information we know at least 109 mixed sex caribou have been harvested since the survey (Table 1). Adjusting for an equal male and female harvest this represents the equivalent of 218 males or between 2 and 5 years of sustainable caribou harvest.

This tally is likely far less than the total caribou harvested as reporting is not mandatory and is only recorded by way of word of mouth.

On November 17, 2014 DOE recommended that the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board immediately limit annual caribou harvest on Baffin through one or more of the following options: 1) Moratorium; 2) Total Allowable Harvest of between 47 and 140 bull caribou (depending on calf recruitment); or 3) Special Management Areas (with restricted/no harvest) in order to reduce the chance of caribou being extirpated from Baffin Island.

On December 19, 2014 by Interim Order, the Minister of Environment announced an interim moratorium on all caribou harvest on Baffin Island, effective January 1, 2015. The interim moratorium is to prevent the possible extirpation of caribou from all or parts of Baffin Island. Longer term management will be outlined in a management plan developed through the co-management process.

It is important to note that to be effective in its goal of supporting the recovery of the caribou population the management plan must contain harvest restrictions that not only prevent further decline of the population, but that allow it to increase. There are two critical points that must be understood by all parties: 1) Any harvest that is above or equal to the population growth rate will prevent any population recovery; and 2) any harvest at all will mean it will take longer for the population to recover. This means that the most effective means of supporting the quickest recovery of the population is to continue the moratorium as part of the management plan until the population reaches a level where it can support a small harvest.

Current Status:

DOE is developing a Baffin Island Caribou Management Plan (BICMP), using the input from the extensive consultation process to date. The first draft of this plan is now complete and being distributed to co-management partners, affected communities and HTOs. It is hoped that all co-managers will take an active role in developing the BICMP.

The BICMP is structured under the themes of 1) planning process/partners, 2) caribou status/ecology, 3) harvest management, and 4) monitoring. The first draft of the BICMP attempts to summarize the current status and recommendations in each of these themes. This plan is not exhaustive; it is succinct in order to reduce timelines usually associated with management plan development.

Consultations:

DOE has undertaken extensive consultations with regard to the status of Baffin Island caribou. Most recently the 'Working Together for Baffin Island Caribou' Workshop was held in November 2014, in collaboration with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, DOE Elders Advisory Committee and Baffin Hunters and Trappers Organizations. Co-management delegates discussed Baffin Island caribou management goals, co-management issues,

and possible management actions. Workshop participants indicated they support the creation of a management plan and continued consultation with regard to caribou management. The communities overwhelmingly support action, however many participants indicated a preference for harvest levels being restricted on a per household basis. Unfortunately as there are currently 4615 households on Baffin Island (as per Nunavut Bureau of Statistics), a per household allocation of even one caribou would deplete the entire caribou population.

Prior to that workshop, DOE and co-management partners held an earlier workshop in July 2013 with more than 60 representatives from Baffin HTOs, other co-management partners, invited speakers, and elders. Consultations were completed with all Baffin Island communities/ HTOs (including Hall Beach and Igloolik) in December 2013 and January 2014. As part of DOE's social science/*Inuit Qaujimatuqangit* research program, a hunter/ elder survey and public opinion poll were conducted in communities that traditionally harvest Baffin Island caribou. Overall, most participants agreed that there are currently few caribou on Baffin Island and that management actions are necessary.

The management goals expressed throughout all consultations were to halt the further decline in Baffin Island caribou, and to allow the caribou population to increase.

Options/Recommendations:

The BICMP will be a formal plan, with a clearly delineated process for review, with the management goals of halting the decline in Baffin Island caribou and allowing the population to increase.

DOE will undertake consultations with Baffin HTOs in March 2015 to discuss the draft BICMP. The draft plan will also be shared with other co-management partners and their input solicited. A second draft of the plan will be prepared after the consultations are complete.

DOE recommends that all affected individuals, communities, HTOs and co-management partners review the draft BICMP and provide feedback to DOE as soon as possible.