



**SUBMISSION TO THE**  
**NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**FOR Information:**

**Decision: X**

**Issue: Qamanirjuaq caribou herd population status and harvest**

**Background**

- The Qamanirjuaq caribou subpopulation of barren-ground caribou has declined from an estimated abundance of 494,000 in June 1994 to 348,000 in June of 2008, and again to 264,718 in June 2014. Indicators of productivity, disease prevalence, and relative abundance on core calving grounds are consistent with these findings.
- A Qamanirjuaq caribou calving ground photo-survey was successfully completed in June 2014, followed by a composition survey in October of that year.
- Many local hunters are reporting more disease and strange behaviours within the Qamanirjuaq herd. Some hunters are also reporting reduced availability of caribou and distributional shifts, particularly during the fall and spring.
- The intra-territorial trade in caribou meat over the internet has accelerated harvesting and has become a conservation concern for the Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB). The KWB is concerned intra-territorial meat sales will continue to accelerate this decline.
- While *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) indicates natural declines follow peak periods of caribou abundance, exploration and mining interests on calving grounds and key access corridors further risk the productivity and long term health and viability of this and other migratory caribou populations, risking future harvesting opportunities for subsistence caribou harvesters.
- The Qamanirjuaq herd is Nunavut's largest caribou herd. The herd is worth an estimated \$20-25 million annually in replacement food costs for subsistence hunters in Nunavut, Northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.
- An inter-jurisdictional management plan developed by the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) is currently being used to make recommendations to the jurisdictions and Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) regarding the management of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq subpopulations of barren-ground caribou.

## **Current Status**

- The results from the 2017 population assessment (approximately 288,000 caribou) indicate there was some population stability between 2014 and 2017 but the overall trend and productivity indicators confirm a continued decline.
- The 2014 population estimate of approximately 265,000 Qamanirjuaq caribou indicates that the herd has declined 24% since the June 2008 abundance estimate of approximately 344,000 caribou, or 4% annual decline on average.
- Overwinter calf survival studies undertaken in April 2015 and 2016 indicate that the herd is continuing its declining trend.
- The Department of Environment (DOE) has identified a potential mixing of the Lorillard and/or Ahiak herd with the Qamanirjuaq herd prior to the start of the 2017 calving ground survey. This mixing of herds could have caused an over-estimate of the Qamanirjuaq estimate.
- An IQ research study of Qamanirjuaq caribou is being developed with academic IQ researchers.

## **Consultations**

Representatives from DOE traveled to the communities of the Kivalliq region, between February 20 and 26, 2018 to meet face-to-face with the Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs). The representatives gave an update on the Qamanirjuaq caribou survey results, Musk Ox surveys and other issues concerning ungulates in the Kivalliq Region. Presentations with summary results of recent surveys and other details concerning Kivalliq Ungulates were given to the HTO members present.

## **Recommendation**

Due to the short period of stability between 2014 and 2017, the DOE will not be recommending any management actions at this time but strongly recommends continued monitoring of the herd's decline.

## **Attachments**

- 1) Qamanirjuaq caribou 2017 survey summary report
- 2) Consultation Summary Report