



SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
FOR
Information: **Decision: X**

Issue: 2015 Population Estimate and 2015-2017 Demographic Population Indicators of the Dolphin and Union Caribou herd (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus x pearyi*)

Background

- The Dolphin and Union caribou herd was assessed as a Species of Special Concern by Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2004, up-listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* in 2011 (SARA) and listed on the Northwest Territories list of Species at Risk as a species of “special concern” in 2014.
- The Dolphin and Union caribou herd plays an essential role in the lives of Inuit and Inuvialuit people. They are highly valued from a spiritual, economic, cultural, and harvest perspective.
- Concerns from the west Kitikmeot communities have put an emphasis on increasing monitoring efforts on the Dolphin and Union caribou herd.
- The Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment (DOE) worked with the Federal Government to develop the Dolphin and Union Management Plan. DOE provided technical information and expertise during the process. This plan was approved in 2017.
- The Dolphin and Union caribou herd has undergone a decline from the extrapolated population estimate of $27,787 \pm 7,537$ (95% CI) animals in 2007 to $18,413 \pm 6,795$ (95% CI) caribou in 2015. This decline is statistically significant and puts the herd in a “Declining Status” based on the management status defined in the Dolphin and Union management plan.
- 2015-2017 demographic indicators show no sign of a recovery in the population:
 - cow survival rate is 0.70
 - pregnancy rates of female collared caribou were 88% in 2015 and 2016
 - the fall composition survey showed a low calf to cow ratio of 0.25
 - the spring composition survey showed a low calf to cow ratio (recruitment) of 0.11
 - the sex ratio (bull:cow ratio) of 0.15 shows an imbalance in the sex composition

Current Status

- In December 2017, the Dolphin and Union caribou herd was assessed as Endangered by COSEWIC. Their status of the species under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) has not yet been changed in response to the new COSEWIC assessment.

- The DOE does not recommend a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) on this herd at this time. The Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) and the communities do not support a TAH.
- Community-based management initiatives have been implemented with the intent to promote the recovery of this herd.
- DOE has engaged with affected communities and respective co-management partners (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., HTOs, Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board) on the monitoring of the Dolphin and Union caribou herd.
- In 2018, DOE deployed 50 female collars on the Dolphin and Union caribou herd. The movement monitoring will be paired with an additional population survey in October 2018, to monitor the declining trend in the population.

Engagement, meetings, and consultations:

- KRWB AGM, 2015: Progress report on fall population surveys
- January 11-13, 2016: Second Joint Meeting in Cambridge Bay (NU), progress report on fall population surveys.
- April 19, 2016: Draft Consultation with the Cambridge Bay HTO and Community of Cambridge Bay, progress report on fall population surveys.
- April 28, 2016: Draft Consultation with the Kugluktuk HTO and Community of Kugluktuk, progress report on fall population surveys.
- KRWB AGM, 2016: Final result on fall 2015 population survey and progress report on the fall 2016 composition survey
- May 25, 2017: Consultation with the Cambridge Bay HTO. Final result on fall 2015 population survey and final results on the fall 2016 composition survey and progress report on the spring composition surveys
- KRWB AGM, 2017: Final results on the demographics indicators: pregnancy rate, fall and spring composition surveys, and sex ratio.
- January 24, 2018: Consultation with the Kugluktuk HTO, final results on the research program on the Dolphin and Union Caribou herd (2015-2017 population estimate and demographics indicators) and future 2018 monitoring programs.
- February 1, 2018: Consultation with the Cambridge Bay HTO, final results on the research program on the Dolphin and Union Caribou herd (2015-2017 population estimate and demographics indicators) and future 2018 monitoring program.
- February 22, 2018: Consultation with the Cambridge Bay Community, final results on the research program on the Dolphin and Union Caribou herd (2015-2017 population estimate and demographics indicators) and future 2018 monitoring program.
- July 18, 2018: Consultation with the Kugluktuk HTO, Dolphin and Union caribou herd management recommendations base on the report finding.
- September 28, 2018: Consultation with the co-management partners on the report, bring additional clarification, and discuss the management recommendations.

Recommendation

- The DOE does not recommend a TAH at this time but due to the declining status of the herd, it is recommended that the DOE follow the approved Dolphin and Union Caribou Management Plan.

Date: November 3, 2018