



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Baffin Island Caribou Consultations with Hunters and Trappers Organizations

Background:

- The first island-wide survey of Baffin Island caribou occurred in March 2014, and the results indicated there are currently very few caribou on Baffin Island. The population was estimated to be 4,652 caribou (3,462–6,250 with a 95% Confidence Interval).
- In August 2015, the Minister of Environment accepted the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB's) decision to allow a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of 250 male caribou, thereby ending an 8 month harvest moratorium that started in January 2015.
- The Baffin Island Caribou Management Plan, initiated in December 2014 with input from ten affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., and Parks Canada, was submitted to the NWMB for decision in March 2016. Suggested revisions were to be followed up on with further consultations. This plan reviews the current status of Baffin Island caribou management and outlines a sustainable harvest management and research plan for Baffin Island caribou for the next 5 years.
- Consultations on the draft Management Plan occurred March 16–April 7, 2015 and included discussions on caribou collaring under the research and monitoring component of the Plan. While there was caribou collaring support from several of the communities initially, that support appeared to later collapse given opposition from two communities in particular, late in the consultation process.
- Potential for spatially separated and geographically discrete subpopulations of caribou on Baffin Island are suggested through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and past scientific analyses, supporting the potential benefits of telemetry research and monitoring.

Current Status:

- Results from composition surveys done in 2015 and 2016 indicated good numbers of calves were being produced but there was low over-winter calf survival. The 2017 and 2018 spring composition surveys, for north, south and central Baffin, were completed and suggested good overwinter calf survival for the survey areas in north central and south Baffin, except Prince Charles Island.
- A final summary report of the results from 2015-2018 caribou composition surveys was distributed to co-management partners and Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) in September 2018. No comments have been received to date.
- Following the 2014 abundance survey it was estimated that Prince Charles Island had over 1/3 of the population of caribou on Baffin Island. Prince Charles Island has likely experienced a second winter die-off in 2018. At this time it is unknown how extensive the die-off was and how it has impacted the overall abundance of caribou on Baffin. The number of caribou observed on the island in the spring of 2018 was much less than the 2014 estimate and observed individuals in 2018 was 302 compared to 690 in 2016.
- Telemetry research through satellite collars on caribou, at this time in the population cycle, could identify important caribou critical habitats. Identification of key over-wintering habitats, as a potential limiting factor in Baffin Island caribou survival, is of particular importance.
- Male harvesting is problematic for some communities, but sex-selective harvesting was not supported by board members at the June 2016 NWMB regular meeting. Sex-selective harvest management options were discussed with communities during consultations.

Consultations:

- Community consultations were held with HTO representatives from Kimmirut, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pangnirtung, Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Hall Beach, Igloolik, Arctic Bay and Pond Inlet. Unfortunately, during this consultation tour, weather prevented us from meeting with Clyde River but the DOE is currently planning to meet with that HTO in February 2019.
- The HTO members expressed their interest in the logistics of composition and abundance surveys, the recent suspected die-offs on Prince Charles Island, the presence and speculated abundance of wolves on Baffin, changes to the TAH and male-only harvest, concerns regarding development, HTO participation and how IQ could be incorporated into research.
- The majority of HTOs expressed interest in some form of a telemetry collaring program in the future for Baffin Island. The Iqaluit, Pangnirtung and Arctic Bay HTOs had the most outspoken members in support of a collaring program but all HTOs indicated that they planned to discuss this internally prior to making a commitment. An email

stating support for a collaring program was received from the Mayukalik HTO on January 24, 2019.

Recommendations:

1. N/A