

**SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD (NWMB)**

Regular Meeting No. RM 002- 2019

FOR

Information: ☐

Decision: ☒

Issue: ***Amendment of the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for Baffin Island Caribou (BIC), 2019***

Background:

Since 2014, there was at first a TAH of 0 caribou, which was later changed to a TAH of 250 male-only caribou for Baffin Island. The QWB and HTOs have debated this TAH since it was implemented in 2015.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) teaches that the social behaviour and welfare of caribou is affected when only one sex of caribou is harvested for several years. A balance between the sexes of caribou is needed for every aspect of their complex seasonal and annual lives during their long-term population cycles. It is not just a question of having enough males to mate with females during breeding. The age, size and condition of males can affect calf survival and their growth to become healthy and productive adult females and males. Strong males can break snow and sometimes ice that covers vegetation in winter so females and their calves may access winter forage. Even if science cannot corroborate it, the complex role of males is understood through IQ, and well known among reindeer herders in Eurasia.

The prohibition of Inuit from harvesting female caribou has also undermined Inuit culture values and knowledge regarding the hunting and use of female caribou.

At the 2017 QWB AGM, HTO representatives discussed options for restructuring the harvesting of BIC, passing a resolution for an increase in the total TAH and an allocation for harvesting females. In 2018, the QWB requested that the NWMB increase the TAH to 280, with 35 of them being females. The NWMB asked the QWB to wait for information to be provided by GN biologists about recruitment surveys conducted since 2014.

During a community tour of Qikiqtaaluk communities in January 2019, two biologists from the Government of Nunavut's Department of Environment (DoE) provided information to the Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) indicating that information from calf-cow ratios showed positive signs that the caribou population on Baffin Island is probably increasing. These conclusions corroborate information from Inuit who travel on the land throughout the year. Hunters are reporting increased caribou distributions and abundances in several areas. Perhaps most notably and consistent with IQ, caribou are returning to the winter hunting area of Cape Dorset, which was first abandoned by caribou in winter 1987-88, 30 years ago.

DoE has indicated that they will not conduct another survey of Baffin Island before 2025.

In lieu of a new survey, the QWB proposes to use the results of 2014 DoE survey to revise the current TAH. In 2014, DoE was 95% confident that there were between 3,462 and 6,250 caribou in the Baffin Island population. Subsequently, the TAH was set at 5.4% of the mean estimate of

4,652. Given the early signs of population recovery as expected based on IQ and supported by DoE recruitment surveys, the QWB recommends that the TAH could be revised to 278 (i.e., 5% of 5,500, which is about half way between the mean estimate and the upper limit of the 2014 confidence-interval limit).

Female caribou have been protected from harvesting for 5 years. We propose that from the 278 TAH, hunters should be allowed to harvest up to 45 females per year on Baffin Island. This could enable the production of up to 2 caribou winter parkas per year in each of 9 communities, assuming that it takes 2-3 caribou skins per parka. These 45 tags should be for either female or male caribou, as hunters may not get all 45 females each year because of accessibility issues.

The NWMB should recognize that this recommendation from the QWB Executive is a very modest request to improve the male-only harvest of caribou on Baffin Island. It does not fully reflect how caribou should be harvested according to IQ.

Consultation:

The QWB, the HTOs and local Inuit have all raised this issue on numerous occasions for years, not only at the QWB AGM in November 2017. The HTOs and QWB participated in rescheduled community consultations by DoE in January 2019.

Recommendation:

The QWB recommends that the TAH for harvesting of caribou on Baffin Island beginning in July 2019 should be set at 278 per year, with up to 45 of those being females. The 45 tags for females should also be available for the harvesting of males.

Prepared by:

Michael Ferguson, Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, 613-407-1197

Date:

May 14, 2019