



SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
FOR
Information:

Decision: X

Issue: Request a decision to lower the current Southampton Island caribou TAH of 1,000 caribou to 800 caribou and to maintain the current non-quota limitations which state that no one shall harvest mature bulls or cows with calves.

Background:

- Southampton Island caribou have declined approx. 80% between 1997 & 2013 largely due to an observed reduction in pregnancy rates from 80% in 2000, to 40% in 2011. In addition, the inter-territorial sale of caribou meat speed the decline in recent years.
- DOE originally used the commercial harvest as a herd management tool during times of over abundance by setting quotas based on survey findings. Now it's the reproductive disease *Brucella suis* in combination with the harvest based on export for money by individual harvesters that threatens the population.

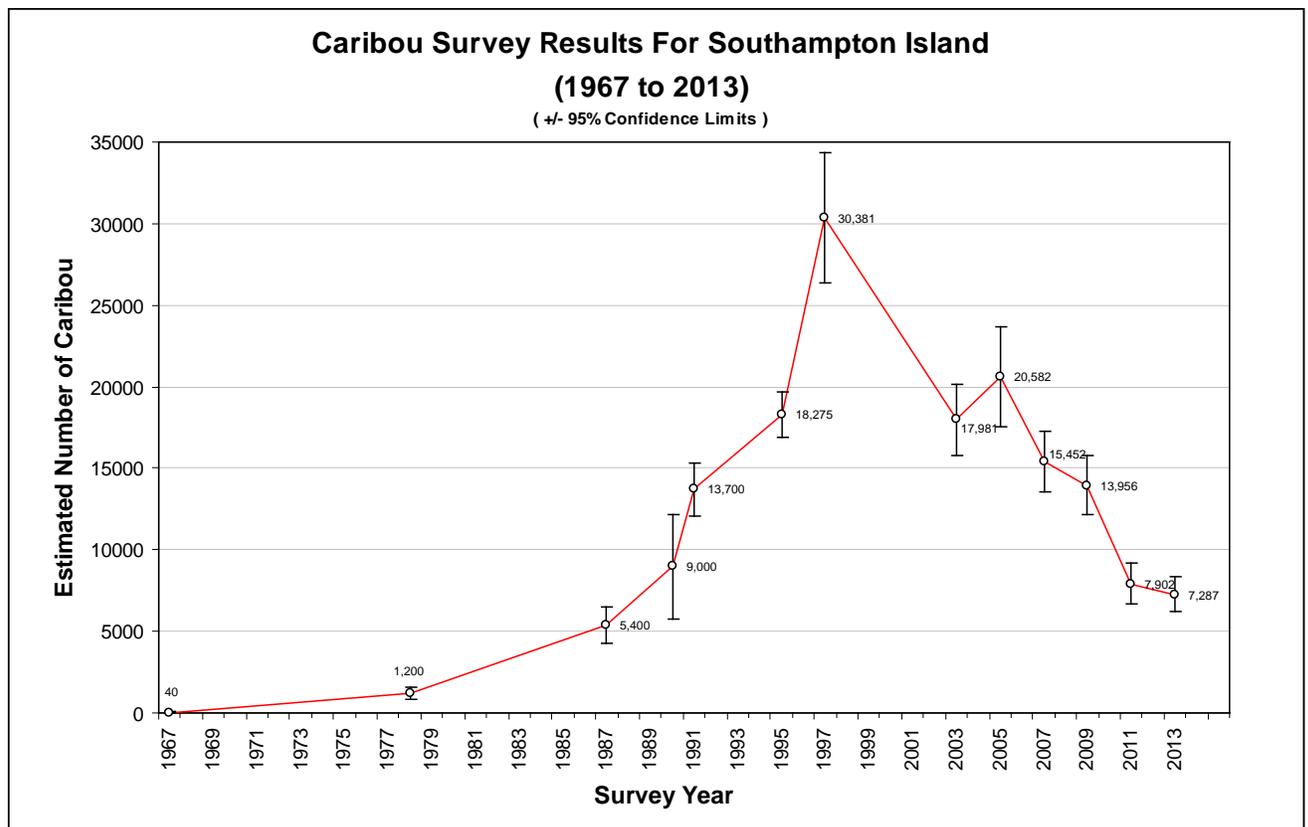


Figure 1 Survey history of the Southampton Island Caribou Herd from introduction in 1968 to the most recent survey in May 2013.

Current Status

- The June 2013 survey estimated 7,287 +/- 1,045 (95% CI) adult caribou (preliminary estimate subject to change), 616 caribou less than the June 2011 estimate of 7,903 +/- 1,261 (95% CI). These results suggest that since the 2011 survey, the caribou harvest has been above sustainable limits (Figure 1).
- In discussions between the HTO and DoE in the fall of 2012, the Coral Harbour HTO requested a TAH be set for the herd as their attempts to control the harvest within the community were not successful. During this meeting a TAH of 1,000 caribou / year was recommended based on June 2011 survey results. The HTO recommended the TAH not be adjusted until a full survey of the herd was completed in May 2013.
- During a meeting with the Coral Harbour HTO in the fall of 2011, the main harvesting issue was an increase in caribou harvesting rates through a recently developed export market using “face book” and “sell & Swap” internet applications to sell SHI caribou meat across Nunavut but mainly to Baffin Island communities. This export was believed to have contributed to the observed decline.
- Extremely low pregnancy rates, (below 50% of adult cows) are equally concerning and likely related to a combination of the reproductive disease *Brucella suis* (Brucellosis) as well as an over-harvest of breeding females for export, as internet correspondence had indicated customers had offered higher payment for fat caribou, which during the winter and spring seasons are predominantly pregnant females.

Management Considerations

- The Coral Harbour HTO & DOE conducted aerial population estimates of caribou on Southampton Island in June 2011, 2012 & May 2013. Of the three recent surveys only the June 2011 and May 2013 were complete.
- Survey results indicate that the population has declined since 2011 though the decline was not statistically significant.
- Given an estimated sustainable harvesting rate of 11% (considered high for barren-ground caribou), a harvest of 800 caribou/year should maintain current abundance. The herd has continued to decline under the current TAH of 1000 caribou. Exceeding 800 caribou/year will put the herd at high risk of continued decline.
- The Coral Harbour HTO and the Nunavut Department of Environment are in complete agreement with the recommended reduction from 1000 to 800 caribou over the 2013/14 harvesting season.

- As a result the DoE requests the NWMB support the decision to reduce the Southampton Island Caribou TAH from 1000 caribou to 800. We also request the maintenance of the current NQLs across the Island.
- The Coral Harbour HTO and DoE will re-evaluate TAH levels in May 2014.