



Tłıchǫ Government

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March 20, 2024

Re: Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association's (KHTO) request to increase the total allowable harvest (TAH) and to remove the non-quota limitation (NQL) for Bluenose-East (BNE) caribou in Nunavut, being agenda Item #4 on NWMB meeting agenda for March 26, 2024

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS OF TŁIČǪ GOVERNMENT

Introduction and Acknowledgement

Tłıchǫ Government acknowledges KHTO's rationale and recommendation to increase the TAH of BNE caribou to 450 caribou and remove the non-quota limitation (NQL) of up to a 1:1 female-to-male harvest sex ratio, as well as the authority of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) to determine the total allowable harvest for Nunavut and consider the request to remove the NQL for BNE caribou in Nunavut, both as considered in the *Nunavut Agreement*. Tłıchǫ Government appreciates the opportunity to provide its views concerning the request to increase the TAH and to remove the NQL for BNE caribou in Nunavut.

In this submission, Tłıchǫ Government outlines our perspective and rationale for a precautionary strategy for managing the BNE caribou within Wek'èezhì and our encouragement of a coordinated herd-wide perspective for developing, implementing and monitoring management actions.

The Sahtì Ekwò (BNE) is a migratory herd of barren-ground caribou whose annual range occurs across Nunavut (Kitikmeot Region) and the Northwest Territories (Sahtu Region and Wek'èezhì regions).

Across the transboundary range of the BNE herd, co-management authorities share a common goal - to ensure long-term health and conservation of caribou so that the keystone relationship

between caribou and Inuit, Dene, and Métis people that has occurred since time immemorial is respected and sustained for our current and future generations.

Summary – Tłıchǵ Government Request of NWMB

Tłıchǵ Government respectfully asks that the NWMB consider the following:

- a) use a herd-wide approach in its review of the KHTO’s request to increase the TAH and remove the NQL for BNE caribou in Nunavut;
- b) request KHTO to update and publicly share its community-based caribou management plan that was developed in 2019¹; and
- c) request the KHTO to continue providing annual updates on its community-based monitoring of harvest and health of the BNE herd through its participation in the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM).

What follows is the Tłıchǵ Government background and rationale for the consideration asked of the NWMB.

Management of Bluenose East caribou in Wek’èezhìi, Northwest Territories

The Tłıchǵ Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement (Tłıchǵ Agreement) came into effect on August 4, 2005, and is the first comprehensive land claim and self-government agreement in the Northwest Territories. The Tłıchǵ Agreement established the Tłıchǵ Government as the governing authority to manage 39,000 km² of Tłıchǵ lands, and to implement laws and programs related to their governing structures, membership, culture, language and communities.

The Tłıchǵ Agreement established the Wek’èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) as an institution of public government, which performs the functions of wildlife management in Wek’èezhìi as set out in the Tłıchǵ Agreement.

Tłıchǵ Government has been working to conserve and recover barren-ground caribou over the past 14 years:

- In 2010, Tłıchǵ Government submitted a revised joint proposal on caribou management actions in Wek’èezhìi with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to address the steep decline of Kǵk’èetì Ekwò (Bathurst caribou) and to help stabilize the BNE herd. The 2010 joint management proposal and a subsequent public hearing held by the WRRB reflected Tłıchǵ Government’s leadership and commitment to implement co-management responsibilities under Chapter 12 of the Tłıchǵ Agreement because a key

¹ Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association (KHTO). 2019. Bluenose East community caribou management plan. Kugluktuk Hunters' and Trappers' Organization, Unpublished Report. Kugluktuk, NU.

recommendation was to manage and reduce the harvest of Ekwò (caribou) by Ṯchq̱ citizens and other Indigenous harvesters.

- Ṯchq̱ Government has worked closely with GNWT and submitted several joint management proposals to the WRRB (in 2010, 2016, 2019 and 2021) on management and monitoring actions for Bathurst and BNE caribou; a proposal to undertake diga (wolf) management actions over a five-year period was submitted to the WRRB in 2020.

In 2019, the WRRB² determined a TAH of 193 bulls/year for BNE caribou in Wek'èezhì (based on 1% of the 2018 population estimate as per WRRB determination #1-2019) and the proportional allocation of 39% for Ṯchq̱ citizens (76 bulls as per WRRB determination #2-2019).

Ṯchq̱ Government and GNWT staff are working to update joint management proposals for the two caribou herds and for wolves as they are all expiring this year. Ṯchq̱ Government and GNWT will be submitting an updated joint management proposal on BNE caribou in August 2024 to the WRRB.

Current Status of Bluenose-East Caribou

GNWT completed a BNE caribou calving ground survey in June 2023 and a BNE caribou fall composition survey in October 2023. Based on these surveys is work, GNWT estimated the BNE herd at 39,525 caribou with a 95% confidence interval (CI) between 33,021 – 47,310 based on these surveys. The BNE herd has increased significantly compared to the last calving ground survey in June 2021, which was estimated to be at 23,202 caribou (95% CI: 19,247 – 27,971). The results indicate the BNE herd is showing an upward trend from the previous year's results: 23,200 in 2021 and 19,000 in 2018.

Ṯchq̱ Government received the monitoring information from GNWT in Nov 2023 on BNE herd size, trend, and demography and has discussed these results with Ṯchq̱ communities and Ṯchq̱ Government leadership (Chief's Executive Council- CEC).

In November 2023, the Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management³ (ACCWM) determined that the BNE herd status continues to be Yellow (intermediate and increasing) based on the June 2023 population survey results and subsequent discussions of its members. The ACCWM's decision recognized that despite some very positive community and

² Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB). 2019. Reasons for Decisions Related to a Joint Proposal for the Management of the Sahti Ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd. Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board Unpublished Report, Yellowknife, NT.

³ Advisory Committee for Cooperation on Wildlife Management (ACCWM). 2024. Action Plan for the Bluenose East caribou herd 2024/2025 - Yellow status. Yellowknife, NT.

scientific observations, the observed population level has not yet reached above the ~60,000 threshold to warrant the change to a green status.

In Wek'èezhìi, the current TAH of 193 bulls/year for BNE caribou was based on 1% of the 2018 population estimate per WRRB Determination #1-2019. As per WRRB Determination #2-2019, the proportional allocation (39.3%) for Tłıchq citizens was 76 bulls. Tłıchq Government has maintained this harvest level since 2019. It should be noted that the WRRB's Determination (#2-2019) for allocating the BNE caribou harvest in Wek'èezhìi also included Nunavut for 69 bulls or 35.7% of the TAH; and to date this allocation has not been utilized.

Tłıchq Government's Current Response Strategy and Managing Harvest of Bluenose-East Caribou

The Tłıchq Chief's Executive Council (CEC) has decided to encourage and support the continuation of the WRRB determination off the TAH of 193 bulls for the foreseeable future. This decision also reflected recommendations made by Tłıchq elders and harvesters that came from a 2-day workshop with Tłıchq Government staff in November 2023. The CEC is taking a precautionary approach to harvest management. Despite the recent 2023 population survey, which, for the first time in over a decade, contained encouraging data, Tłıchq remains committed to our cautious approach, and we would prefer, in considering an increased TAH in Wek'èezhìi, to have additional data from both scientific and traditional knowledge sources that show herd recovery.

Tłıchq are doing their best to protect BNE caribou during this era of scarcity. Our decision to be cautious has been made with the knowledge that we continue to sacrifice hunting opportunities to fully support herd recovery, which in turn keeps our relationship with the caribou strong and conserves our right to harvest caribou for food and to sustain our way of life – something that goes back further than anyone can remember. We encourage decision-makers across the BNE herd range to also take a precautionary approach when it comes to harvesting the BNE herd, including a selection of bulls over cows.

Closing

As Tłıchq Government asks the NWMB to consider our submission, we do want to stress that Tłıchq Government recognizes the deep relationship of BNE caribou to Inuit in the western Kitikmeot Region, and in particular, the community of Kugluktuk as represented by the KHTO.

Tłıchq Government acknowledges and appreciates KHTO's collaborative vision and initiative to discuss and share perspectives and management strategies for BNE caribou, as most recently evidenced by the KHTO organized meeting in January, 2024. Tłıchq Government respect Inuit as a wildlife co-management partner and recognizes the previous and ongoing collaboration with KHTO on wolf management across the BNE and Bathurst caribou ranges as a key example of this important work.

Tłıchǫ Government appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission and looks forward to its consideration.

In Tłıchǫ Unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tammy" followed by a stylized flourish.

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambault
Director, DCLP
Tłıchǫ Government

Cc:

Larry Adjun, Chairman, Kugluktuk Angoniatit Association
Jody Pellisey, Executive Director, Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources Board
Heather Sayine-Crawford, Director, Wildlife and Fish, Government of the Northwest Territories