



Mr. Joseph Judas
Chair, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
102A, 4504 49th Ave
Yellowknife NWT X1A 1A7

MAR 02 2020

Wildlife Research Permit Application – Wolf Collaring on the Central Barrens

Dear Mr. Judas;

Thank you for your letter of February 21, 2020 providing the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) recommendation on the Wildlife Research Permit Application for wolf collaring on the winter ranges of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds when located in the North Slave Region.

The proposed work has the following objectives:

- 1) provide data useful for understanding how wolves travel among caribou on their winter ranges;
- 2) provide insight into patterns of movement and distribution of individual wolves between barren-ground caribou herds;
- 3) identify active den sites and document fidelity to dens; and,
- 4) improve our understanding about wolves and support management actions through the collar data collected.

Information on the relative abundance and degree of movement of wolves across the caribou winter ranges is very important to inform wolf harvest targets and to enable the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) and our co-management partners to monitor and assess effectiveness of a number of current and proposed management actions. In addition to these key objectives, collaring data will allow for a wide range of other scientific and management questions to also be considered and addressed.

.../2

The WRRB recommendation did not support the Wildlife Research Permit application and advised ENR to resubmit the application following the WRRB proceeding on the GNWT – Tłıchǫ Government Joint Wolf Management Proposal. ENR rejects this recommendation from the WRRB specifically as it relates to the deployment of wolf collars on the central barrens, based on the following rationale:

1. The program meets the intent of WRRB recommendation # 2-2019 from its letter of February 6, 2019 that wolf monitoring be undertaken. To inform future management actions, it is extremely important to have a baseline of wolf seasonal location information and range use relative to the Bathurst and Bluenose East caribou herds. The first three objectives of the proposed work stated above are related to improving our understanding of wolf movements, patterns of movement among herds and occupancy and productivity of den sites. This information will be invaluable to effectively implement and improve the success of any management actions taken in the future.
2. ENR has consulted with and has received support on the proposed wolf collaring program from the following Indigenous governments in the North Slave region: Tłıchǫ Government, Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and Yellowknives Dene First Nation.
3. The distribution of Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou this winter is separate and non-overlapping and would allow for direct targeting of wolves associated with those herds. In the previous two winters the Bathurst, Bluenose-East and Beverly caribou herds overlapped heavily and under such a scenario it would be extremely difficult to target wolves that might be associated with each herd individually. Caribou distribution this winter presents an ideal opportunity for collaring wolves associated with the Bathurst herd; an opportunity that may not exist next winter. Further, concurrent deployment of caribou and wolf collars would make wise use of resources.
4. Linking wolf collar deployment to a review of the Wolf Management Proposal, and awaiting a decision by June 30th, effectively delays wolf collar deployment until January 2021. In order to deploy wolf collars in 2020, the deployment program needs to begin this week. ENR is of the opinion that wolf collars deployed in the next few weeks will provide important data and insights over the upcoming months and will serve to support informed decision making to address the urgent situation with the Bathurst herd. Any delay in collecting this type of information would be counter-productive for these herds that are in significant decline.

It is our view, consistent with current and previous correspondence from WRRB, that the current status of both the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds requires strong and timely action including the deployment of wolf collars this winter.

We very much appreciate the commitment to continue discussions moving forward and ENR commits to continuing dialogue with the WRRB and WRRB staff to ensure mutual interests are addressed through wildlife monitoring and management efforts.

Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have at 867-767-9237, ext. 53225 or via email at: karin.clark@gov.nt.ca.

Sincerely,



Karin Clark
A/Director, Wildlife and Fish Division
Environment and Natural Resources

c. Ms. Erin Kelly, Ph.D., Deputy Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

Mr. Brett Elkin, A/Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations
Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Director, Culture and Lands Protection
Tłchq Government

Mr. Michael Birlea, Manager, Lands Protection, Culture and Lands Protection
Tłchq Government

Ms. Jody Pelligsey, Executive Director
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board