



October 30, 2020

Mr. Joseph Judas, Chair  
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board  
4504 49TH AVENUE  
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 1A7

Dear Mr. Judas:

**Final Submission – 2021-2024 Wolf (Dìga) Management Proceeding**

The Tłıchǫ Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories submit to the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board our Final Submission on the Wolf (Dìga) Management Proceeding.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of the undersigned.

Sincerely,

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Attachment

c. Ms. Shaleen Woodward  
Principle Secretary

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Deputy Minister  
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Mr. Bruno Croft  
Superintendent, North Slave Region  
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Grand Chief George Mackenzie  
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## Wolf Dìga Management Proceeding Final Submission

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Barren-ground caribou are a keystone species across northern Canada and central to the way of life of Indigenous peoples across the Northwest Territories. Subsistence harvesting continues to be a critical part of the cultural, social and spiritual well-being of many Indigenous governments and organizations. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Tłıchq Government revised Joint Proposal on Management Actions for Wolves (Dìga) on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou (Ekwò) Herd Winter Ranges: 2021 – 2024 was developed in response to the urgent need for continued action to increase caribou (ekwò) cow and calf survival rates of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds.

The current population estimates for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds are the lowest estimates on record from surveys going back to the 2000s for Bluenose-East and the 1980s for the Bathurst herd. In response to the major decline of these herds, harvest of the Bathurst herd has been restricted to zero since 2016 and the Bluenose-East herd has a Total Allowable Harvest of 193 bulls. In addition, the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan and recent recommendations from the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) provide direction for action on habitat conservation and management to support the herds. It is in this context that wolf management has been put forward by the GNWT and Tłıchq Government, other Indigenous governments and organizations, communities and recommended by the WRRB, as a viable option for reducing mortality of caribou to support herd stability and recovery.

After a thorough review of predator management approaches in other jurisdictions, available scientific literature, local and traditional knowledge and a technical feasibility assessment of wolf management options, GNWT and the Tłıchq Government developed a proposal for wolf management in January 2020. The WRRB approved a wolf management pilot program for the winter of 2020, and requested that a revised joint management proposal be submitted in August 2020.

The Revised Wolf Management Proposal consists of a coordinated approach to wolf management actions aimed at reducing wolf abundance on the Bluenose-East and Bathurst winter range areas. The approaches include:

1. Enhanced Support for Wolf Harvesters and the Traditional Economy;
2. Aerial Wolf Reduction Actions; and,
3. Monitoring, Research and Assessment.

The Pilot Program conducted in winter 2020 utilized this approach, focusing first on supporting harvesters and the traditional economy. In March 2020, harvesters had not met reduction

targets for the two herds and as such aerial removals were undertaken. Target wolf removal levels were reached on the Bathurst herd (31 wolves out of a target of 29-39) and an estimated 45% of wolves on the Bluenose East caribou winter range were removed (54 wolves out of a target of 73-97). Lessons learned during the Pilot Program have provided valuable insight into key areas of improvement to build on as we move forward with this program, pending WRRB approval and recommendations.

Tłıchq Government and GNWT participated in the WRRB Level Two Public Proceeding Technical Sessions (Science and Traditional Knowledge) on the Wolf Management Proposal and submitted responses to two rounds of Information Requests. In doing so, the two governments have clarified goals and objectives, the rationale for the types of actions selected, what will be monitored and how the program would be adaptively managed, and what other actions we are taking in support of caribou recovery. Commitments made during the Science Technical Session led to further modeling to explore outcomes under scenarios of higher cow survival rates, different levels of mortality attributed to wolf predation, two levels of wolf reduction and emigration. In addition, Tłıchq Elders, during the Traditional Knowledge Technical Session, reiterated their understanding and support for the proposed program.

The GNWT and Tłıchq Government will continue to rely on the best available scientific, local and traditional knowledge in all our decisions about wolf management. While we can learn from experience elsewhere, we need to be prepared to test our assumptions and be responsive to new information, adapting our approach to the unique context in the NWT. The joint proposal will use an adaptive management approach to improve the program throughout its implementation. The proposal recognizes that there is uncertainty, and emphasizes the importance of monitoring to enhance learning, revising approaches as our understanding improves and making decisions in a co-management context.

The Wolf Management Proposal recommends that multiple approaches to reduce wolf (dìga) predation on Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou (ekwò) be undertaken in conjunction with annual monitoring for a minimum of 5 years (including the 2020 Wolf (Dìga) Management Pilot Program). If annual wolf (dìga) removals are maintained at a meaningful level there is a reasonable likelihood of having a measurable effect on improved caribou (ekwò) survival rates over this time frame.