



February 03, 2021

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

Dear Mr. Judas:

WRRB Reasons for Decision Final Report – 2020 Dìga Management Proceeding

Thank you for your thorough review of the *Revised Joint Proposal on Management Actions for Wolves (dìga) on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East Barren-ground Caribou (ṛekwò) Herd Winter Ranges: 2021-2024* (wolf management proposal). The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Tłıchǫ Government are currently reviewing the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) Reasons for Decision Final Report. At this time, we would appreciate clarification on Recommendation #1-2020, #7-2020, #15-2020 and #17-2020 to help inform our response.

As the WRRB is aware, the overall goal of the wolf management proposal is to contribute to the stabilization and recovery of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds. As identified by the WRRB in its February 2019 Predator Management Recommendations, the situation for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds is dire and requires immediate action.

The GNWT and Tłıchǫ Government proposal was informed by a range of published and unpublished information, including the Wolf Technical Feasibility Assessment released in 2017 by the WRRB, GNWT, Tłıchǫ Government and other co-management partners. Members of the Wolf Feasibility Assessment Technical Working Group were aware of the sensitivities that surround wolf management as reflected in the preamble to the assessment. Similarly, the Tłıchǫ Government and GNWT anticipated that the proposal and its actions would be highly scrutinized, and that aerial removals of wolves would be controversial and unpalatable to many people.

The decision to proceed with wolf management in general and aerial removals in particular was not taken lightly, and was based on the best available information and reflected what we heard from the WRRB and others on the need for strong action to support caribou recovery.

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One of the lessons learned by other jurisdictions is that sustaining wolf removal levels of 60-80% for a number of years is necessary to support an increase in caribou survival rates. Wolf removal levels of up to 30-40% are generally considered sustainable and ineffective at altering caribou adult and calf survival rates. Despite the significant efforts of the Tłıchq Government and the GNWT to support ground-based harvest during the decline of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds, wolf removals by ground-based harvesting alone on caribou wintering ranges have not reached the levels needed to support recovery of the herds.

The Tłıchq Government and the GNWT have supported harvesters through incentives, harvesting and pelt preparation workshops, the elimination of wolf tag fees, and allowing for the use of bait to harvest wolves. The Tłıchq Government have set up wolf harvesting camps, assisted the GNWT through the provision of caribou collar distribution and observations from fixed-wing surveys.

With wolf harvest levels remaining consistently low in the wolf harvest incentive area and on the winter range of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds in the NWT it is probable that this harvest will remain low since herds have been located in areas where travel can be challenging.

The GNWT and Tłıchq Government will continue to support ground-based harvesting as the main pillar of our wolf management program, while recognizing that other methods of wolf removal may be needed to enable the program to meet its targets and ensure we can meet the original intent and objective of supporting caribou recovery. However, without alternate methods for supplementing ground harvest we recognize that there is a significant possibility that the target levels for wolf removal may not be met.

Given the WRRB's recommendation that aerial removal of wolves be halted and alternate measures of removal be considered, the GNWT and Tłıchq Government would appreciate an indication of what alternative method(s) outlined in the Wolf Technical Feasibility Assessment would be supported by WRRB to supplement ground-based harvest if removal targets are not met.

Technical staff from the Tłıchq Government and the GNWT would appreciate an opportunity to meet with WRRB staff to help inform our responses to these recommendations.

The deadline for the Tłıchq Government and the GNWT to respond to the Reasons for Decision is February 19, 2021. The Tłıchq Government and GNWT would like to request an extension to March 12, 2021 to accommodate the proposed meeting between Tłıchq Government, GNWT and WRRB prior to submission of our final response.

Sincerely,



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



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c. Dr. Erin Kelly, Deputy Minister
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