



June 7, 2019

Hon. Robert C. McLeod, Minister
Environment and Natural Resources
Government of the Northwest Territories
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Grand Chief George Mackenzie
Tłıchọ Government
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Re: 2019 Bathurst Caribou Joint Management Proposal

Dear Minister McLeod & Grand Chief Mackenzie:

On January 22, 2019, the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) received a joint management proposal from the Tłıchọ Government and the Department of Environment & Natural Resources (ENR), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), entitled “*Joint Proposal on Management Actions for the Bathurst Ekwò (Barren-ground caribou) Herd: 2019 – 2021*”, which outlines proposed management actions for the *Kokètì Ekwò* (Bathurst caribou) herd in Wek'èezhì. Following an initial assessment of the *Kokètì ekwò* management proposal, the WRRB determined that a Level 2 review was appropriate, as per its Rule for Management Proposals. Therefore, the Board initiated a proceeding, which included a public comment period and the establishment of an online public registry. The public comment period was closed April 5, 2019. Since then, the Board has been deliberating and reviewing the available evidence in order to prepare its final Reasons for Decision Report.

Throughout the proceeding, ENR assured the WRRB that submission of the 2018 Bathurst Caribou Calving Ground Survey Report was imminent. This report will include the most up-to-date monitoring information on the *Kokètì ekwò* herd. Initially, the WRRB was told that the calving ground survey report would be made available in late April 2019. Most recently, the Board was advised that the calving ground survey report would not be available for a few more weeks.

In the absence of the calving ground survey report, the Board and its staff do not know to what extent the current rate of decline is due to caribou deaths or shifts. In the joint management proposal, it states that “*Additional analyses are being done to evaluate the demographic*

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implication of the three collared Bathurst cows switching to the Queen Maud Gulf coastal calving area”.

Those analyses are essential for the Board to understand the problems facing the Kokèti ekwò herd. The joint management proposal does not provide updated adult or calf survival rates. The proposal states that *“Figure 3 illustrates a declining pattern of productivity for Bathurst caribou due to declining trends of calf survival and fecundity from 2007 to 2014; this analysis is currently being updated to include recent data from 2015 to 2018”*. Without this information, the Board cannot determine why the herd is declining.

In light of these circumstances, the WRRB must delay the submission of its final Reasons for Decision Report. As a result, the Board has adjourned the 2019 Bathurst Caribou Herd Proceeding until July 19, 2019 (Motion #644-05-06-2019) to allow ENR the time necessary to complete and provide the 2018 Bathurst Caribou Calving Ground Survey Report.

If the calving ground survey report is not submitted by that date, the WRRB will give consideration to compelling ENR officials to attend before the Board to explain the reasons for the continuing delay.

The Board will reopen the record in this proceeding to include the 2018 Bathurst Calving Ground Survey Report. In addition, the WRRB will be posting additional documents to the registry to assist with the completion of the final Reasons for Decision Report. A list of documents will be provided to the parties to the proceeding.

The WRRB will finalize its deliberations on the joint management proposal during its board meeting, scheduled for September 2019, and make recommendations on the proposed Kokèti ekwò management actions thereafter. The Board’s final Reasons for Decision Report will be submitted by no later than September 30, 2019. If there are any questions, please contact our office at (867) 873-5740 or jpellissey@wrrb.ca.

Sincerely,



Joseph Judas
Chair

Cc Dr. Joe Dragon, Deputy Minister, ENR-GNWT
Rita Mueller, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, ENR-GNWT
Bruno Croft, Superintendent, North Slave Region, ENR-GNWT
Laura Duncan, Tłı̄chǫ Executive Officer, TG
Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault, Director, Culture and Lands Protection, TG
Michael Birlea, Manager, Culture and Lands Protection, TG