

February 14, 2025

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Tłıchq Government
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Via Email
Michael.Birlea@tlicheo.ca
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Re: Management Proposal for Diga (Wolf) Harvesting Program

Dear Mr. Birlea and Ms. Behrens:

As per section 12.5.1 of the Tłıchq Agreement, the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) considers the above-mentioned proposal, submitted by the Tłıchq Government (TG) on January 20, 2025, a wildlife management proposal for the period of January 1, 2025 to January 1, 2026. The overall goal of the proposal is to continue efforts through winter 2024/25 in reducing diga numbers sufficiently to enable an increase in survival rates of both calf and adult Kòk'èetì and Sahti Ekwò (Bathurst and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou) and in doing so promote stabilization and recovery of the herds. The proposal also seeks to facilitate knowledge exchange between experienced and less experienced diga harvesters.

Based on the WRRB's Rule for Management Proposals, the WRRB determined it should undertake a Level 1 review. The management proposal request was posted to the WRRB's website on the Management Proposals page from January 20-31, 2025. No formal comments were submitted by the public.

From 2019 to 2024, TG and the Department of Environment & Climate Change (ECC), Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) have undertaken diga management actions in Wek'èezhìi following the WRRB's conclusion that a serious conservation concern for both the Kòk'èetì and Sahti Ekwò herds exists. The Board recommended that, in addition to harvest limitations and reducing disturbance to the ekwò herds and their habitat, additional management and monitoring actions that focused on reducing predation, specifically diga, were required to support the recovery of the Kòk'èetì and Sahti ekwò herds.

The WRRB understands that the GNWT-ECC and TG are now conducting a comprehensive assessment of the five-year diga management program to determine whether the objectives have been met, not met, or partially met. Outcomes of the evaluation are expected to inform whether further predator management actions are needed and provide guidance on how to implement them. However, TG has concluded that diga removal through this harvest program should continue in order to keep contributing to the recovery of the ekwò herds.

The Board notes that, while there may not be any significant impact to ekwò recovery as the number of diga removed will be too few and too localized, the benefits of an on the land experience with a transfer of knowledge and skills from elders to youth is a worthwhile program. Therefore, following a lengthy

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deliberation, the Board agreed to approve the management proposal as presented (WRRB Motion #970-12-02-2025).

As it is always important to have knowledgeable elders and/or mature harvesters present when any on-the-land training is taking place, the Board recommends that knowledgeable elders or harvesters will be present to ensure Tłchq cultural values towards diga are being incorporated – especially since diga are known to be very powerful animals.

Data collection during the diga harvest program is critically important and should be comparable to data collected during the previous five-year period. The WRRB understands that while a diga carcass collection is no longer sponsored by the GNWT, they are collecting diga skulls. The Board recommends that, at minimum, the following should be recorded:

- Date, harvest location, and sex of the diga.
- Number of days spent hunting, and the distance traveled to quantify hunter harvest effort.
- Skull collected as a tooth can be aged.
- In the field and prior to skinning, weigh the diga carcass to help in distinguishing younger age classes.

At the completion of the program, the Board requests that TG provide a report on effectiveness of the diga harvesting program, i.e., did the program meet its core goal, as well as sharing the data collected.

The WRRB looks forward to continued collaboration with TG regarding diga management and monitoring actions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office.

Sincerely,



Joseph Judas
Chair

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