

# Barren-ground Caribou Survey Results Released

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*YELLOWKNIFE* (September 8, 2006) - Results from the July 2006 surveys of the Cape Bathurst and Bluenose-West caribou herds indicate these herds continue to decline. The July 2006 survey of the Bluenose East herd indicates this herd has remained the same size since last year. The results were presented to the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories) at meetings in Inuvik on September 7th.

Photocensus surveys, completed in July, 2005 showed that the three barren-ground caribou herds, harvested mainly by hunters in the Inuvik and Sahtu regions of the Northwest Territories, had declined from peak numbers observed last decade.

- **Cape Bathurst** - The Cape Bathurst Herd had from an estimate of 17,500 in 1992 to an estimate of 2,400 in 2005. In 2006, herd size was estimated at 1,800.
- **Bluenose-West** - The Bluenose-West Herd had declined from an estimate of 98,900 in 1987 to an estimate of 20,800 in 2005. In 2006, herd size was estimated at 18,000.
- **Bluenose-East** - The Bluenose-East Herd had declined from an estimate of 104,000 in 2000 to an estimate of 66,600 in 2005. In 2006, herd size was estimated at 66,200.
- **Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula** - In September 2005, a visual survey of the Peninsula estimated 3900 caribou and reindeer. In July 2006, a photographic survey estimated 3,100 animals, of which approximately 80% are reindeer.

Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Minister Michael Miltenberger stated, "Recognizing that we all have to work together, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) released a NWT Barren-ground Ground Caribou Strategy in February which outline ways to help the herds recover. Actions under the strategy are being implemented and it is critical we work closely with the co-management boards."

Presentations to co-management boards and affected communities will occur throughout September and will also include the Sahtu and Gwich'in Renewable Resources Boards.

For the most severely affected Cape Bathurst herd, recommendations from the co-management boards to close resident, non-resident and commercial hunting have been implemented. For the other herds, the number of tags for resident hunters and outfitting have been reduced. As well, resident hunters may only shoot bulls.

In addition to these surveys, a photographic survey was also done of the breeding females on the calving grounds of the Bathurst herd in June 2006. Results from this survey will be available in mid-September. The last survey was in June 2003 and the Bathurst Caribou Management Plan calls for surveys every three years, when numbers are low.

ENR Technical Support Manager Dr. Ray Case says, "These surveys have confirmed the trends we found last year. Reversing the trends will now need to be the focus of management actions."

Minister Miltenberger added, "A Caribou Summit will be held in early 2007 to bring together all co-management boards, agencies, harvesters and groups that are affected by low caribou numbers. To help our herds recover, we will need everyone's full support for measures that must be taken so our children will have caribou in the future."

For more information please contact:

Ray Case - ENR  
Manager, Technical Support  
Wildlife Division  
(867) 920-8067

Ron Morrison - ENR  
Superintendent, Inuvik Region  
(867) 777-7295