

GNWT Provides Bathurst Caribou Management Action Proposals to Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board

YELLOWKNIFE (19 December 2006) - The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has submitted a proposal to the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) outlining potential management actions for the Bathurst caribou herd.

"As participants at the recent workshop on the Bathurst Caribou Management Plan recommended, we need to take serious action now to deal with the continuing decline in this herd," said Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Minister Michael McLeod. "The management actions proposed to the WRRB are consistent with the management actions identified in the management plan when herd numbers are low."

The implementation of the Tlicho Agreement established a new resource management regime in the Tlicho settlement area. The Agreement requires that resource management action proposals must be reviewed by the WRRB.

The Bathurst caribou herd's range extends from south of the Northwest Territories (NWT) border, east of Great Slave Lake, northwest to Great Bear Lake and northeast to the Bathurst Inlet in Nunavut. Results from the 2006 calving ground survey indicate a 73 percent decline in herd's size since 1986.

The GNWT's proposed management actions for the herd include establishing compulsory reporting of harvest for all caribou hunters, eliminating commercial sale of caribou meat, reducing commercial tags available for outfitting and establishing a no hunting corridor on Tlicho winter roads.

"When caribou herds are declining, there are no sustainable harvest levels," added Minister McLeod. "Unfortunately, these proposed actions will create economic hardships but we have already shut down all commercial and resident hunting of the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-East and Bluenose-West herds and similar actions must now be considered for the Bathurst caribou herd."

The proposed actions are intended to limit the harvest to four percent of the 2006 herd estimate of 128,000 caribou. The requirement for compulsory reporting of harvest will allow a reassessment of these measures next year.

ENR staff will meet with Tlicho communities to review the proposed actions. A public meeting on the management actions will be held in Yellowknife in January.

The Tlicho Agreement and case law require that priority be given to non-commercial harvest over commercial harvest.

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