

Independent Review Supports Science Used to Make Caribou Management Decisions

YELLOWKNIFE (January 22, 2009) – An independent report on barren-ground caribou studies in the Northwest Territories supports the scientific methodologies used by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT).

The report, produced by the Alberta Research Council (ARC) and released today by Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Minister Michael Miltenberger, identifies that:

- Defining caribou herds by calving ground affiliation is consistent with current practice.
- ENR's caribou survey methods have been consistent with common practice.
- Existing data supports a decline in the Bathurst and Bluenose/Cape Bathurst herds.
- Managing these herds on the basis of decline is a sound precautionary conservation measure.

“This independent report verifies that our approach on collecting and interpreting data is sound,” said Minister Miltenberger. “It also confirms what we heard at the NWT Caribou Summit and from traditional users - that most barren-ground caribou herds in the NWT are in decline.”

ARC is an independent research agency that provides practical, science-based information and advice to national and international policy makers and resource users on all aspects of resource management and sustainable development. An ARC unit comprised of three research scientists carries out independent technical reviews at the request of other agencies or groups.

The ARC Report also contained the following nine recommendations to improve caribou research and management programs:

- Substantially increase collaring efforts for all caribou herds.
- Create a standardized, regularly scheduled monitoring program to improve long-term planning and reporting on caribou research.
- Increase focus on obtaining demographic data on caribou herds.
- Incorporate population modeling into caribou management programs.
- Provide internal or external peer reviews for all survey reports.
- Publicly report survey and research results immediately and transparently.
- Develop a Territory-wide, consistent and strategic approach to ENR's caribou research program with centralized coordination.
- Formulate caribou management decisions within an adaptive management framework.
- Form partnerships to increase resources dedicated to caribou research.

“The GNWT accepts, and will act upon, the findings and recommendations of this report. The results of this report move us beyond debating how we collect data and allow us to continue actions to sustain this resource,” added Minister Miltenberger. “I

have asked the Department to move quickly on the development of a management response plan to this important report.”

Copies of the ARC Report are available on the ENR website at: www.enr.gov.nt.ca.

For more information, contact:

Ella Stinson
Communications Planning Specialist
Environment and Natural Resources
Tel: (867) 920-3310
Email: ella_stinson@gov.nt.ca
Website: www.enr.gov.nt.ca