Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board

Nunavut Impact Review Board
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NIRB File No.17EA068. Agnico Eagle "John Tugak's Huckleberry Claim"

On behalf of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB), I am submitting comments on the mineral exploration proposal from Agnico Eagle on "John Tugak's Huckleberry Claim" ("The Proposal"). The following position and recommendations are consistent with those previously developed and submitted on other proposals on the calving grounds, with full input and support of the BQCMB.

The present application is to permit: installation of an exploration camp on the Huckleberry-0001 property; additional exploration activities including geophysical surveys (airborne and ground support); diamond drilling, rab drilling, trenching; and the use of a winter access from the Meliadine area and from Whale Cove up to the Huckleberry-0001 property.

BQCMB Position on this Proposal

The Proposal is in the core area of the traditional calving ground of Qamanirjuaq Caribou (Figure 1 below). Long-term legislated protected areas that exclude industrial activities must be established for calving and post-calving areas. In absence of this protection, proposals for exploration and development on these areas must be rejected.

The BQCMB's position paper on protecting calving grounds, post-calving areas and other important habitats (Reference below) was distributed by the BQCMB in 2004 to governments and land use planning and regulatory agencies across the caribou ranges. It was also submitted to the NIRB as part of the initial stages of the review of Uravan's permit application (January, 2008) for mineral exploration on the traditional calving ground of the Beverly Herd.

The Qamanirjuaq Caribou Herd is of great importance to Indigenous and other people across the caribou range who rely on the harvest of this herd, including communities in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, northern Manitoba, and northern Saskatchewan. The BQCMB strongly urges NIRB to recognize that effective protection of caribou is critical to both the ecological and socio-economic future of these regions at a time when cumulative effects, including disturbance are seriously impacting northern barren-ground caribou Herds.

At present, the Qamanirjuaq caribou herd is the largest barren-ground caribou Herd in Canada and is of great importance to Indigenous and other people across the caribou range who rely on the harvest of this herd, including communities in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut, northern Manitoba, The Northwest Territories, and northern Saskatchewan.

The BQCMB strongly urges NIRB to recognize that protection of caribou critical range with particular focus on calving grounds is critical to both the ecological and socio-economic future of these regions at a time when the vulnerability of the herd is high, abundance significantly declining, and when cumulative effects, including disturbance will seriously and negatively impact the Herd.

Further, it is the view of the BQCMB that it is fair and responsible not to approve exploration applications up front prior to large investments into specific sites within sensitive areas being made by applicants, which often come under a guise of “light intensity” or “preliminary”. It is our experience that once exploration permits are approved, proponents argue within Canadas legal system that initial investments, often in the millions of dollars, warrant approvals for subsequent development (i.e. “Existing Rights” under NUPA).

The continuing decline in the Qamanirjuaq Herd population means that the Precautionary Principle must be applied when making decisions about human activities that could at some point in their corporate and regulatory evolution, cause significant disturbance to caribou at sensitive times and locations with particular focus on calving grounds. Calving ground photo surveys conducted by the Government of Nunavut (NU) in 2008, estimated a likely decline from 496,000 caribou in June 1994 to 349,000 by June 2008. A second photo survey flown in June 2014 confirmed not only the initial decline but also a continued significant decline to 264,000 caribou. Initial survey results from the most recent survey flown in June 2017 suggest a continued decline.

In light of serious declines in the Qaminirjuaq as well as most other barren-ground caribou herds across North America, the BQCMB urged Regulatory and other territorial and federal government agencies (i.e., NIRB, GN, INAC, KIA) to take action to identify and mitigate potential cumulative effects of human land use activities, including mineral exploration, on barren-ground caribou and to provide complete protection to identified particularly sensitive habitats to disturbance and habitat modification such as calving grounds.

In its regular meetings, community visits and special workshops, the BQCMB has been made aware that most if not all the Kivalliq Communities are opposed to exploration and development on the Qamanirjuaq Calving Grounds. NTI supports the position of the Regional Inuit Associations with respect to their approach to the Nunavut Land Use Plan. KIA has advised that it does not support permit issuance on the Calving Grounds until the Nunavut Land Use Plan is approved.

Recommendations

1. No exploration or development activities should be permitted on the calving ground of the Qamanirjuaq Caribou Herd. Even if these activities occur outside of the calving period; 1- the infrastructure and habitat modification could cause disturbance to calving caribou, and 2- Allowing exploration into calving grounds creates an existing right that would legally bind stakeholders into allowing further development up to and including the instillation of a permanent mine site and associated infrastructure. *The BQCMB does not agree with permitting exploration activities on calving and post-calving areas, and*

recommends that Agnico Eagle's "John Tugak's Huckleberry Claim" application not be approved.

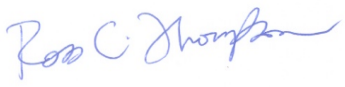
2. Should the NIRB not yet be convinced that denying this permit is warranted, then at a minimum a Part 5 Review of the project proposal should be conducted by the NIRB that includes a full and transparent public discussion in which all interested parties have the opportunity to present their views. The parties should include the Nunavut communities of Arviat, Baker Lake, Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove, as well as others such as the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Denesuline and the BQCMB.

3. Assessment of cumulative effects should occur at a regional scale (i.e., larger than individual project areas), and should include all activities occurring on calving and post-calving areas.

The BQCMB hopes that the NIRB will recognize the critical importance of the Qamanirjuaq caribou herd to Inuit, Dene and Metis people and the need for immediate steps to halt and reverse the declining population trend and preserve critical habitat. To emphasize, the BQCMB urges NIRB to recommend against issuance of this permit and other exploration permits on the Calving Grounds, to avoid further disturbance of the caribou and their critically important calving and post-calving areas.

Please let me know if you require further information or have any questions about these comments from the BQCMB.

Sincerely,



Ross Thompson
Executive Director, BQCMB

cc: Earl Evans, BQCMB Chair; Mitch Campbell, BQCMB Member (Gov. NU) Stanley Adjuk, BQCMB Member (Arviat), Richard Aksawnee, BQCMB Member (Baker Lake), Arviat HTO, Baker Lake HTO, Rankin Inlet HTO, Whale Cove HTO

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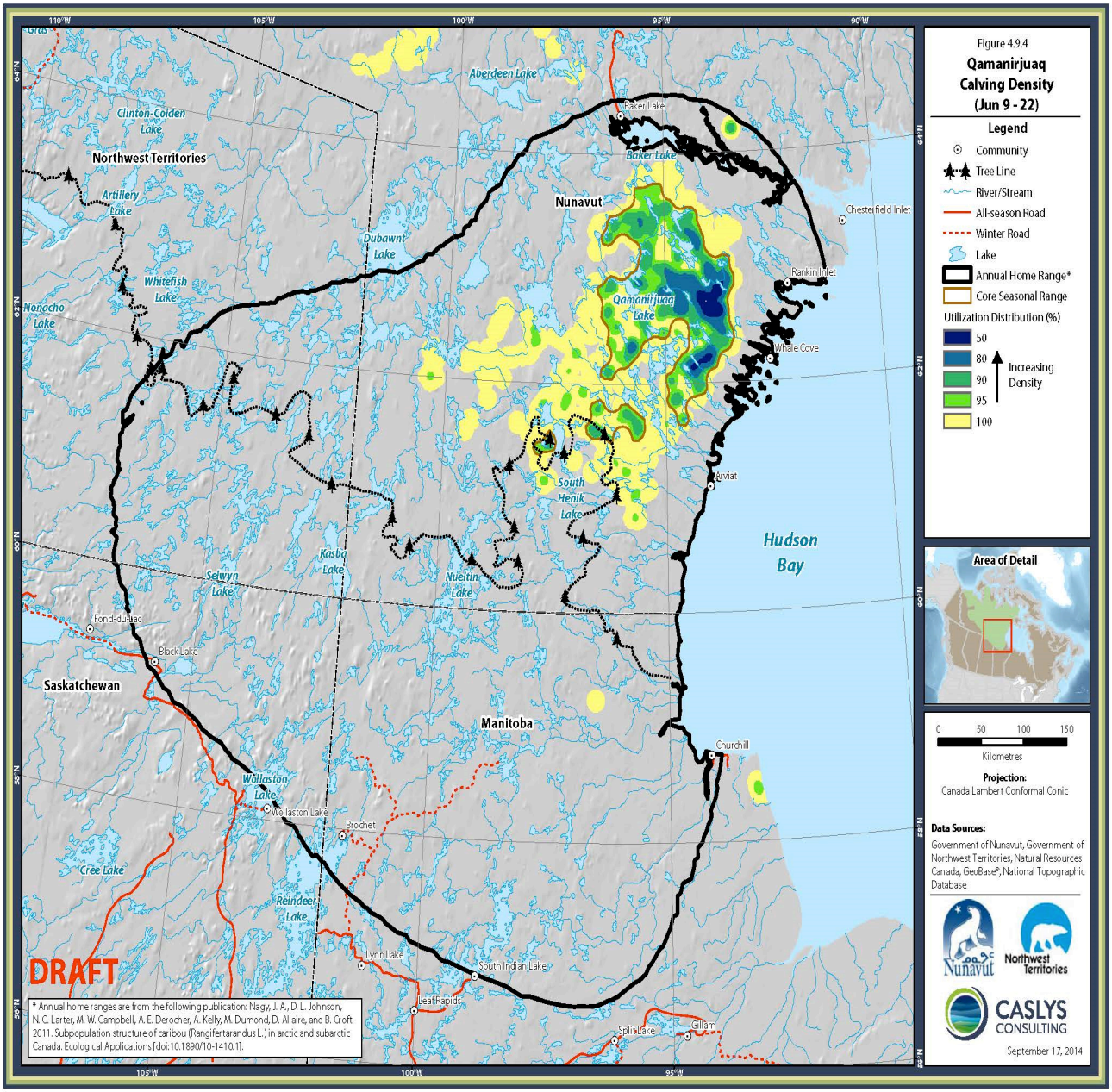
Figure 1. Qamanirjuaq Calving Ground Density, June 2014



Appendix 1. Supplementary Information

Value of the Qamanirjuaq caribou herd: The estimated annual economic value of the Qamanirjuaq caribou harvest was more than $15 million for 2005-2006, according to an analysis conducted by Intergroup Consultants Ltd. The greatest proportion of the Qamanirjuaq subsistence harvest has generally been by Nunavut communities, with

additional harvest by communities in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The herd also has had significant economic value for resident licenced hunters in Manitoba, for outfitters guiding non-resident hunters in Manitoba and Nunavut, and for commercial sale of meat in Nunavut. The annual economic value of the herd's domestic harvest (subsistence harvest by Aboriginal people and harvest by resident licenced hunters) was estimated to be about $10.6 million, its value for outfitted harvesting was approximately $3.5 million annually, and the commercial harvest value was more than $539,500 annually. Internet sale of caribou meat has increased this value significantly, while increasing harvest pressure.

Potential effects of disturbance on caribou: Noise from drills, helicopters and other aircraft, snowmobiles, camp activities, and people working on the ground could potentially result in changes to behaviour of caribou groups. However, the greatest impact will be the permeant infrastructure that will follow exploration is a marketable commodity is found (through NUPA and its "existing Rights" clause). These impacts will include, amongst others, roads providing access to previously inaccessible seasonal range, as well as habitat modification and disruption. Disturbance to caribou can result in obvious behavioural changes, such as running away from aircraft or vehicles. However, disturbance can also cause stress to caribou when behavioural changes are less obvious (e.g., walking), or when they are not apparent to an observer (e.g., when feeding stops but the animal's head remains lowered and through distributional shifts that will put caribou at higher risk of predation, and reduce available quality and quantity of forage).

Frequency - Frequent interruption of caribou feeding during spring migration through to late summer can have a significant negative effect on the condition of individual animals and ultimately productivity. Continuous feeding through immediate post-calving is essential, but caribou also need to feed continuously through the summer (to September) to ensure that they are in good condition during the fall migration and rutting period and have reserves for winter. Insufficient feeding can lead to increased calf mortality rates, reduced pregnancy rates, and lower calf production the following year, and will result in a decrease in herd size.

Timing - Disturbance during the most vulnerable parts of the caribou life cycle are of greatest concern. This could be particularly significant for cows during spring migration, for cows and newborn calves during calving and post-calving periods, and for all caribou during the summer when they need to feed continuously to ensure they are in good condition. The BQCMB is concerned that any project activities between May and October will likely cause disturbance to caribou using the project area, with potential impacts as described above.

Concerns about Cumulative Effects: The BQCMB remains concerned about both the cumulative effects of mineral exploration activity occurring across the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges and the lack of cumulative effects assessment and land use planning underway throughout the region, including the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut. Any mineral exploration activity in the area west and northwest of Arviat will increase significant cumulative effects on Qamanirjuaq caribou and their habitat. We are also concerned about potential consequences for subsistence caribou harvesters of this herd from Nunavut, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, as well as availability of caribou for resident hunters, outfitters and others in Nunavut and Manitoba. Reviewing single

projects in isolation is not adequate to ensure protection of caribou and caribou habitat, or conservation of the irreplaceable renewable resource upon which subsistence harvesters and commercial users of the herd (including caribou outfitters) depend.

References:

Campbell MW, Nishi J, Boulanger J (2010) A calving ground photo survey of the Qamanirjuaq migratory barren-ground caribou (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*) population—June 2008. Gov. of Nunavut Dept. of Env. technical report series no. 01-2010

Campbell MW, Boulanger J, Lee DS (2016) Estimating abundance of the Qamanirjuaq Mainland Migratory Barren-Ground Caribou Subpopulation—June 2014. Gov. of Nunavut Dept. of Env. technical report series no. 01-2016

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BQCMB 2004. Protecting calving grounds, post-calving areas and other important habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou: A position paper. Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, Stonewall MB. 26pp. Available on-line at: http://arctic-caribou.com/library/guiding-documents/

InterGroup Consultants Ltd. 2008. Economic Valuation and Socio-Cultural Perspectives of the Estimated Harvest of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Herds. Prepared for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, Stonewall MB. 28 p. + 2 appendices.