



Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board

Environment and Natural Resources
Government of the Northwest Territories
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BQCMB Comments: Proposed Addition of Barren-ground Caribou to List of NWT Species at Risk

I am writing to provide comments on behalf of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) on the proposed listing of barren-ground caribou under the Northwest Territories (NWT) *Species at Risk Act*. The BQCMB has a mandate for assisting with conservation and management of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, which are two of the barren-ground caribou herds included in the proposed listing. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input.

As you know, the BQCMB is a non-voting participant in the NWT Conference of Management Authorities (CMA) for barren-ground caribou. Representatives of the BQCMB have reviewed the “Species Status Report for Porcupine Caribou and Barren-ground Caribou in the Northwest Territories” and have participated in several CMA meetings. In early May I attended the presentation given to the NWT-CMA by a representative of the Species at Risk Committee (SARC) about the status report and the Committee’s assessments of Porcupine and barren-ground caribou.

We have a few observations and comments that we would like to put on the record at this time:

- *Regarding the listing of barren-ground caribou* – The Board’s position on listing will be determined following a presentation from the GNWT and discussion by board members at the November 14-16 BQCMB meeting.

Although BQCMB members support conservation actions intended to reverse factors that are responsible for caribou declines, Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou harvesters and their communities may see this proposed listing as another step towards restricting their ability to harvest caribou. This would be a negative impact and could prevent achieving consensus on listing.

- *Regarding the main factors* – The BQCMB generally agrees with the statements in the status report regarding the main threats contributing to declines in barren-ground caribou herds in

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the NWT. Board members would like to discuss these and other factors with the GNWT at the November BQCMB meeting.

- *Regarding action to be taken for conservation of barren-ground caribou if listed as Threatened species* - The BQCMB believes that the recommendations in the status report (pp. vii-viii) are reasonable and warranted. We agree that action needs to be taken beyond harvest restrictions to reverse factors endangering the caribou herds. I expect that community engagement will indicate a desire for stronger emphasis on precautionary measures for habitat protection and restrictions on industrial development. In addition, I personally and the BQCMB in general, have called for increased efforts to collect reliable harvest information and to reduce wastage of caribou resulting from hunting.

For the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds in particular, priority actions related to the status report's recommendations would include:

- implementing the existing management plan and priority actions ***and providing sufficient resources for implementation***;
- completing the Bathurst range plan (which applies to a portion of Beverly caribou range), ensuring that it provides effective measures for maintaining adequate high-quality habitat, and initiating range planning for areas of Beverly and Qamanirjuaq range which are not covered by the Bathurst range plan;
- improving harvest reporting; and
- working with other jurisdictions to achieve effective protection of calving grounds and other key habitat components.

The Board also agrees there is a need to increase research efforts in a variety of key areas to inform management actions for all barren-ground caribou herds, and also to monitor the effects of climate change on caribou and implement mitigation actions where possible.

- *Regarding the status of the Qamanirjuaq herd* – As we have discussed previously with you, the BQCMB has an ongoing concern about potential confusion resulting from information being provided by SARC and CMA about the status of the Qamanirjuaq herd that differs significantly from information provided by the BQCMB.

We understand that the method used in the status report to present “the amount of change in numbers in the recent past” provides a result of a 4% decrease for the Qamanirjuaq herd from 1989-2014. However, the BQCMB uses a different method and time frames, which result in decreases in estimated herd size of almost 1/2 from 1994-2014 and 1/4 over a period of only 6 years from 2008-2014. Therefore we are concerned that during community engagement regarding potential listing of barren-ground caribou in the NWT, including discussions with neighboring jurisdictions (SK, MB and NU), misunderstandings may hinder conservation efforts. At a minimum communications efforts will need to be enhanced to manage this potential issue.

As an advisory co-management board of Aboriginal hunters, biologists and wildlife managers, the BQCMB is hopeful that, if barren-ground caribou are listed as Threatened species under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, recovery planning would be implemented with the required political will and resources (human and financial) to ensure that necessary action to support recovery of the herds occurs.

The BQCMB is willing to assist the GNWT with community engagement, and with recovery planning and implementation if barren-ground caribou are listed as Threatened. However, please note that the BQCMB will require supplementary resources to conduct these additional activities.

If you have questions about our comments, please contact the BQCMB Contract Biologist, Leslie Wakelyn (wakelyn@theedge.ca) or Executive Director Ross Thompson (rossthompson@mymts.net).

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leslie Wakelyn".

Chair, BQCMB