

# BEVERLY AND QAMANIRJUAQ CARIBOU MANAGEMENT BOARD

26 March 2009

Leslie Payette  
Manager Environmental Administration  
Nunavut Impact Review Board  
P.O.Box 1360  
Cambridge Bay NU X0B 0C0

Dear Ms. Payette:

## **NIRB File No. 06EN003 – Titan Uranium Inc. Thelon Project Proposal**

On behalf of the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB), I am submitting comments on the application from Titan Uranium Inc. (Titan) for a one year extension to their land use permit in support of their “Thelon” uranium exploration project, which lies on the traditional calving ground of Beverly caribou, north-east of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary. This input is provided in response to the request in NIRB’s letter of 17 March 2009 for comments regarding “any additional mitigation measures that are appropriate” and “any other matter of importance to the Party related to the project proposal”.

The BQCMB understands that the proposed permit extension is intended only to maintain the camp location for future exploration, and that no field operations will be conducted in 2009. Despite the lack of project activity planned for 2009, we would like to take this opportunity to provide information for use by the NIRB to develop and recommend improved permit conditions and to notify INAC and Titan about the need to minimize impacts on both caribou and caribou habitat in Titan’s project area. We believe this is timely input, as the BQCMB did not have the opportunity to provide comments on Titan’s original December 2005 land use permit application, or to recommend conditions for the permit issued by INAC or the previous permit extension. We also note that the NIRB’s March 2006 Screening Decision Report does not specify that the project area is part of the traditional calving ground of Beverly caribou in its list of considerations for making its screening decision (p. 4), although it does indicate that the area has importance to Beverly caribou in its primary objectives (p. 2).

You will not be surprised to learn that the BQCMB is generally concerned about this project because its activities have occurred on important habitats used by Beverly and Ahiak caribou during sensitive periods. Of particular concern is that Titan’s project area is on the traditional calving ground of Beverly caribou.

I will briefly outline a number of points that we want to bring to the attention of Titan and INAC, most of which have been raised in our previous submissions on recent proposals for mineral exploration on the Beverly calving ground:

- The Beverly caribou herd has undergone a drastic decline in numbers, and is extremely vulnerable. I have attached our November 2008 press release to ensure this information is part of the Titan-Thelon file. The BQCMB is working to try to ensure that disturbance to the

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Beverly herd and its important habitats is minimized, and that the herd is given every opportunity to recover from its decline.

- Titan's project area is on the traditional calving ground<sup>1</sup> of the Beverly caribou herd. The BQCMB has recommended that long-term legislated protected areas that exclude industrial development be established for calving and post-calving areas<sup>2</sup>, and is very concerned that mineral exploration is being permitted in this area.
- Titan's Thelon project lies in a special management area (SMA) proposed in the Thelon Game Sanctuary Management Plan, which was intended to protect the Beverly calving area outside the Sanctuary. This SMA was seen to be critical for protecting the caribou herds for both the Inuit and Dene people of the Thelon region.
- Titan's project area lies to the east of INAC's Caribou Protection Area for Beverly caribou, according to maps provided to the BQCMB by INAC. However, Titan's project activities are subject to the Caribou Protection Measures, including:
  - clause 2.1: "In the event that caribou cows calve outside of the Caribou Protection Areas, the Permittee shall suspend operations within the area(s) occupied by cows and/or calves between May 15 and July 15", and
  - clause 2.2, which specifies activities that are prohibited when cows and calves are present (blasting, flights below 300m agl, and use of snowmobiles and ATVs outside camp).
- The conditions of Titan's land use permit should reflect the fact that they are operating in an extremely important habitat for a declining population. At the least, Titan should be required to prepare and implement a Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan that includes a caribou monitoring program. This plan should address requirements of the Caribou Protection Measures and broader issues about potential impacts of all Titan's activities on caribou, and should outline measures to be followed for minimizing these impacts.

We realize that Titan has been issued a land use permit (with conditions) for conducting its exploration activities in this area. We also recognize that the core calving area used in recent years by Beverly caribou is west of Titan's project area. However, we recommend that Titan be notified that future permit conditions may be more stringent in response to the serious situation facing Beverly caribou and the potential loss of caribou harvesting opportunities that may result for Aboriginal peoples across the Beverly caribou range. They should also be aware that if caribou start to once again use the eastern portion of the Beverly traditional calving ground as an annual calving area, prohibition of activities causing potential disturbance to caribou will be recommended for this area by the BQCMB, and probably also by the GN-DOE.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that there is a need for a regional assessment of the cumulative impacts on caribou of mineral exploration and development and other land use activities, including activities in the Kivalliq region of Nunavut and elsewhere across the Beverly range.

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<sup>1</sup> Maps showing the traditional calving ground of Beverly caribou, documented by government surveys up until 1994, are provided on the BQCMB website at [www.arctic-caribou.com/parttwo/mapatlas.html](http://www.arctic-caribou.com/parttwo/mapatlas.html).

<sup>2</sup> Protecting Calving Grounds, Post-Calving Areas and Other Important Habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou: A Position Paper (BQCMB 2004).

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## Recommendations:

1. No exploration or development activities should be permitted on the traditional calving ground of the Beverly caribou herd. The BQCMB does not agree with permitting exploration activities on calving and post-calving areas.
2. Regulatory and other territorial and federal government agencies (i.e., in Nunavut NIRB, GN, INAC) should be taking action to identify and mitigate potential cumulative effects of human land use activities, including mineral exploration, on barren-ground caribou. This 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.
3. If NIRB recommends that INAC issue an extension to Titan's current land use permit, or a new land use permit for future field operations, permit conditions should include the following requirements.
  - a) If caribou cows and/or calves approach Titan's project area, no project activities should be permitted, or subsequently approved by a Land Use Inspector, between May 15<sup>th</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup>. If caribou move into the area before May 15<sup>th</sup> or after July 15<sup>th</sup>, activities (including flights for transporting personnel or supplies, diamond drilling and geophysical surveys) must be suspended immediately. Specifically:
    - Project activities must be prohibited between May 15<sup>th</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup>, as per NPC's conformity requirements regarding the Caribou Protection Measures. No releases should be issued.
    - All activities must be suspended if caribou approach the area during spring migration prior to May 15<sup>th</sup>.
    - Activities should be allowed to resume after July 15<sup>th</sup> **only** if it is demonstrated by a monitoring program approved by GN-DOE and NIRB that post-calving caribou are not in the area. Diamond drilling should not be initiated unless caribou are at least 5 km away from the drill sites.
  - b) A detailed Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan and shut-down plan approved by NIRB and GN-DOE should be in place before Titan is allowed to begin operating.
    - The Plan should include a caribou monitoring program. Monitoring flights should be conducted at altitudes above 610m agl.
    - An independent caribou monitor should be hired (preferably from Baker Lake) to conduct ground-based surveys to help assess when caribou are moving toward the project area.
    - The monitoring system should ensure that advance notification is received for shutting down project activities (including drilling and airborne surveys) if caribou are approaching. This will be necessary to ensure that potential disturbance is discontinued before caribou reach the project area.
  - c) If airborne geophysical surveys are to be conducted as part of this proposed project, they should be described in the permit application and dealt with adequately in the mitigation and monitoring plan so as to minimize disturbance to caribou.
  - d) It is crucial that project aircraft fly at low levels (below 300 m agl) **only** when necessary for safety reasons, and that the amount of time aircraft spend at low levels over the traditional calving ground is minimized and carefully monitored. When caribou are in sight, anywhere

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in the project area or during transit elsewhere, project aircraft should fly at altitudes above 610m agl whenever possible.

NIRB should ensure that regular inspection of project operations is conducted, and that NIRB's permit terms and conditions and NPC's conformity requirements are enforced.

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

Sincerely,

*[original signed by]*

Leslie Wakelyn  
BQCMB Biologist

Attachment

cc: Albert Thorassie, BQCMB Chairperson  
Baker Lake HTO