



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (NWT)

PRESS RELEASE

Barren-ground Caribou Management– March 7, 2006

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council Northwest Territories (WMAC (NWT)) for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) has provided recommendations to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), GNWT, regarding the management of the Cape Bathurst, and Bluenose-West barren-ground caribou herds. WMAC (NWT) recommended that the barren-ground caribou management areas in the ISR be changed to reflect the current ranges of the Cape Bathurst and Bluenose-West herd caribou herds thus allowing for management actions to be targeted to specific herds.

Council advised the Minister that, based on the results of the 2005 population surveys, the recommended total harvest of Cape Bathurst caribou is 240 and the recommended harvest of the Bluenose-West caribou is 1040.

Given that these harvest levels are less than that needed for subsistence purposes by Inuvialuit beneficiaries and beneficiaries of neighbouring land claim settlement areas, WMAC (NWT) recommended that within those two revised management areas non-aboriginal resident, non-resident and commercial caribou hunting be stopped on these herds until new caribou population information becomes available in Summer 2006.

While WMAC (NWT) recognizes that the changes may cause difficulties to non-aboriginal caribou hunters and businesses associated with commercial caribou hunting, they are obligated to protect the Inuvialuit preferential subsistence harvesting right for caribou that is granted under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

In developing these recommendations the Council met with and fully considered the input from the four communities within the ISR potentially most affected by the recommendations (Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk, and Tuktoyaktuk), and the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC). In addition, the WMAC (NWT) had discussions with the Gwich'in and Sahtu renewable resources boards. WMAC (NWT) will continue to work with these groups to identify ways to achieve a reduction in aboriginal harvesting while still meeting the basic needs of the Inuvialuit.

WMAC (NWT) chair, Larry Carpenter stated "Council believes that these actions are in the best interests of Inuvialuit harvesters and the conservation of the barren-ground caribou populations so that they continue to provide for harvesters in the future. Council felt it important to act now with information available as delays could have serious long-term consequences on the caribou

populations.” Council will continue to review management of these herds as new information becomes available and will continue to work with the communities in decision-making throughout the management planning process.

In order to ensure that appropriate information is available for management decisions, WMAC (NWT) has also recommended that ENR work closely with ISR communities to design and conduct additional caribou population studies, increase harvest data collection, develop and implement a conservation education plan and investigate the possible reasons for the herds’ declines.

WMAC (NWT) emphasizes that joint efforts from all stakeholders to support management actions is key to help ensure the conservation of these herds.

For further information please contact:

Katherine Thiesenhausen
Resource Biologist, WMAC (NWT)
p. (867) 777-2828
f. (867) 777-2610
wmacnwt@jointsec.nt.ca

Background on the WMAC (NWT)

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council Northwest Territories (WMAC (NWT)) was created by the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), to give effect to the principles of co-operative management of wildlife by Inuvialuit and government, as specified in the Agreement. The Council began its first full year of activities in 1987/88. Their geographic area of jurisdiction is that part of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) within the Northwest Territories. The WMAC (NWT) focuses on the conservation of birds and terrestrial wildlife species (including polar bears).

The Council provides a forum for resource users and regulators to discuss all wildlife matters pertaining to the Western Arctic Region. Their mandate is to advise ministers on all matters relating to wildlife policy, and the management, regulation, research, enforcement and administration of wildlife, habitat and harvesting for the Western Arctic Region. The WMAC (NWT) also provides advice on wildlife issues to the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Environmental Impact Screening Committee, the Environmental Impact Review Board, land use commissions, and any other appropriate bodies. It is the responsibility of the Council to prepare conservation and management plans, and to determine and recommend harvestable quotas. The Council also reviews and advises the appropriate governments on existing or proposed wildlife legislation and any proposed Canadian position for international purposes that affects wildlife in the Western Arctic Region.

The Council’s membership consists of three members appointed by the Inuvialuit, two members appointed by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), one member appointed by the Government of Canada, and a Chair. The Government of the Northwest Territories appoints representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), and Canada appoints a representative from the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). The Chair is appointed by the Government of the Northwest Territories with the consent of the Inuvialuit and Canada.

<http://www.jointsecretariat.ca/WMACNWT/aboutus.htm>