



Environmental Protection Operations Directorate
Prairie & Northern Region
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Melissa Pink
Manager, Project Assessment Branch
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Government of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

Via email at Melissa_Pink@gov.nt.ca

RE: Boreal Caribou Population Trends, Tlicho All Season Road, EA1617-01

Attention: Melissa Pink

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has reviewed the meeting notes and follow up items sent on November 22nd, 2016. The meeting notes are reflective of the discussions held at the meeting on November 10th, 2016.

The population condition (i.e. size and trend) is an important factor to consider in the determination of risks of a project. The national recovery goal for boreal caribou is to achieve self-sustaining local populations in all boreal caribou ranges throughout their current distribution in Canada. The likelihood of the self-sustaining population is based on two indicators: population trend and disturbance level within a boreal caribou range. Recovery is achieved for boreal caribou in the Northwest Territories by maintaining population and range conditions that support its self-sustaining status.

ECCC supports that population trends be applied to the NT1 range for this environmental assessment at a minimum, as the national Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Boreal population, in Canada (PR#38) identifies a single range in the Northwest Territories (NT1). However, it is important to note that when the recovery strategy was released in 2012 there was insufficient information to establish a range-level population trend for NT1 (Appendix F, Table F-1). ECCC is not aware if this situation has changed for NT1. Filling knowledge gaps on population dynamics through studies was identified as a high priority in the recovery strategy.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is the government organization with primary management responsibility for boreal caribou in the Northwest Territories.

The GNWT is also leading the development of regional range plans for the species, including one for the North Slave Region. The absence of a range plan for the North Slave Region will necessitate that in our advice to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB), ECCC will lean toward a more precautionary approach.

ECCC recommends that the meeting notes and commitments be formalized with the MVEIRB on the public registry. Further discussions among all parties are required related to the adequacy of mitigation and monitoring measures to inform the MVEIRB decision.

Sincerely,



Georgina Williston
Head, Environmental Assessment North

cc: Ruari Carthew, Senior Environmental Assessment Officer, MVEIRB
Sarah Robertson, Project Manager, Northern Projects Management Office
Boyan Tracz, Wildlife Management Biologist, Wek'èezhii Renewable Resources
Board