

IR Number: IR0607-003-03

Source: MVEIRB

To: GNWT

Issue: Tourism/Harvesting Developments (Cumulative Effects)

Preamble

Various submissions to EA0506-003, the previous assessment of the same development, as well as to EA0607-003 have stressed the importance of cumulative effects. Concerns over cumulative effects, i.e. effects of the proposed development in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future developments, are a key issue in this assessment.

To assess cumulative effects, knowledge of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future development is a basic requirement. It should be noted that in the Review Board's definition of reasonably foreseeable development is not limited to proposed developments that have entered the regulatory process.

Request:

To the extent possible, please provide the following:

1. A map or a series of maps showing all known past and current tourism, hunting, outfitting, or related developments within the Thelon watershed.
2. Operating seasons of the identified operations.
3. Total number of caribou harvested under hunting or outfitting licences in the Thelon watershed.
4. A projection, e.g. in form of a map or series of maps, where future development might occur for the same areas. As a minimum the analysis should show areas of different likelihoods for further developments.
5. A projection of the number of animals likely to be harvested in the future.
6. Any analysis the GNWT can provide on what the likely impacts from the proposed development on tourism will be. This should include the best options for timing of the development to minimize impacts.

All maps should be submitted in electronic format to allow analysis in the MVEIRB's geographic information system. The GNWT is encouraged to consult with the INAC to provide maps of comparable scale for this IR and IR0607-002-02.

Response

1. A map or a series of maps showing all known past and current tourism, hunting, outfitting, or related developments within the Thelon watershed.

Outfitting for big game in Wildlife Management Unit U (WMU U) has been in effect since 1999. There is only one licenced outfitter for WMU U; they have two active operators under this licence.

There are currently eight Tourist Establishment Licence (TEL) holders in the area of paragraph above, with a total capacity of 187 guests. There are also nine Tourism Outfitter Licences (TOL) for the area. Some operations have both TELs and a TOL.

The GNWT currently does not have a map representing all known past and current tourism, hunting, outfitting, or related developments within the Thelon watershed.

2. Operating seasons of the identified developments.

Tourism activities mostly occur in the summer months but generally can occur between June 1 - October 31.

Outfitters operating under the *Wildlife Act* have annual licences, which expire on June 30 each year. The two big game outfitters operating in the Thelon watershed carry out their barren ground caribou hunts from 15 August - 31 October, which corresponds to the hunting season for non-resident aliens (NWT Summary of Hunting Regulations - July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007).

Note that the hunting season for non-resident aliens for muskox is from 15 August - 15 April and for wolves it is from 15 August - 15 May. Therefore, outfitted hunts for muskox and wolves could occur during the development period proposed by Ur Energy.

3. Total number of caribou harvested under hunting or outfitting licences in the Thelon watershed.

NWT hunting licences are not restrictive to any specific area in the NWT; therefore the GNWT cannot provide harvest information from hunting licences specific to the Thelon watershed. The GNWT's response will have to focus on outfitting licences that are restrictive.

Wildlife Management Units U and U/BC/01 cover the Thelon watershed. Both Units are open to all NWT residents for the purposes of hunting barren ground caribou, moose, muskoxen, wolves, black bear and wolverine.

- There is presently a total of 150 barren ground caribou tags issued for big game outfitting.
- There are a total of 29 muskoxen tags available for Lutsel K'e First Nation for big game outfitting and/or community hunts, which applies to WMU U (U/MX/01).
- Wolf hunting is allowed by residents, non-residents (NR) and non-resident aliens (NRA). This is regulated through the number of tags available rather than by quota. NR and NRA are allowed to take up to two wolves per year.
- Commercial tags issued to date for 2006/07
 - Barren ground caribou – 135
 - Muskoxen – 1

Commercial Outfitter Tag Usage 1999 - 2005

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total Per Species
Caribou Tags	30	43	93	135	146	121	115	683
Wolf Tags	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	5
Muskox Tags	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	9
Total All Animals	30	43	95	135	149	125	120	

4. A projection, e.g. in form of a map or series of maps, where future development might occur for the same areas. As a minimum the analysis should show areas of different likelihoods for further development.

It is not possible to map where “future (tourism) developments” might occur. There are no current applications to conduct new tourism activities. Without expressions of interest, the GNWT cannot predict future interest.

5. A projection of the number of animals likely to be harvested in the future.

By using the table from GNWT’s response to question #3 above, it can be estimated that future harvest levels could be between the following ranges.

Caribou 30 – 90, Wolf 0 - 2 and Muskox 0 – 5.

Also, the number of caribou tags allocated for non-resident sport hunts caribou is dependent on a current population estimate for the Beverly herd. The GNWT is proposing to conduct a photographic calving ground survey of the Beverly herd in June 2007.

General Hunting Licence holders also harvest caribou in the area. Lutsel k'e has been doing surveys to record caribou harvest over the past two to three winters and should be contacted in this regard.

6. Any analysis the GNWT can provide on what the likely impacts from the proposed development on tourism will be. This should include the best options for timing of the development to minimize impacts.

The “March 1, 2007 to May 31, 2007” that Ur Energy Inc. provides as a timeline to complete exploration would most likely not interfere with current tourism activities in this area. However, this timing is currently under question (see IR0607-003-05).

Big game outfitting for caribou is done in late summer and early fall to target trophy bulls and to operate when weather conditions are mild and more predictable. The proposed exploration program should avoid this time period when big game outfitters are in operation.

The exploration program should also avoid the spring period when cows are in their last trimester of pregnancy when cows are often in poorest physical condition and are migrating long distances to their respective calving grounds. During this period, direct disturbances that require additional energy expenditure or interfere with feeding can have significant negative impacts on cow health and calf production.

If caribou are in the exploration program area, the proposed development should also avoid the summer and early fall periods when caribou need to replenish body stores as well as the fall rut to not negatively affect cow pregnancy rates.