



September 1, 2015

Alan Ehrlich, Manager
Environmental Assessment
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Review Board
Box 938, #200 Scotia Centre, 5102 – 50th Avenue
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N7
Email: aehrich@reviewboard.ca

Via Email
aehrich@reviewboard.ca

Re: EA1314-01 Jay Project – Request for Current Bathurst Caribou Management Plan and Schedule for Updates

Dear Mr. Ehrlich:

As per the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board's (MVEIRB) written request, dated August 24, 2015, the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) submits the attached description and background material regarding the Bathurst caribou herd long-term management planning process to be considered during the environmental assessment of Ekati Diamond Mine's Jay project. This process is being conducted in conjunction with the Department of Environment & Natural Resources, Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Department of Culture & Lands Protection, Tłıchǫ Government.

The WRRB is aware that the GNWT has provided additional material related to the Bathurst caribou herd, including the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan planning status report, and will be providing the MVEIRB with a copy of the existing Barren-ground Caribou Management Strategy for the Northwest Territories 2011-2015, entitled "*Caribou Forever – Our Heritage, Our Responsibility*".

If you have any question regarding the attached documents, please contact our office at (867) 873-5740 or jpellissey@wrrb.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jody Pellissey" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jody Pellissey
Executive Director

Attachments

Cc J. Grant Pryzyk, Chair, WRRB
Lorraine Seale, Manager, Project Assessment, Lands, GNWT
Sjoerd van der Wielen, Manager, Lands Protection, Tłıchǫ Government

Bathurst Caribou Herd Long-Term Management Planning Process

On June 13, 2012, thirteen organizations (Akaitcho Territory Government [including the Yellowknives Dene First Nation], Athabasca Denesuline, Dehcho First Nation, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Department of Environment – Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Wildlife and Environment – Nunavut Tunngavik Inc, Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, NWT Métis Nation, Sahtú Renewable Resources Board, Tłı̄chq̄ Government, and the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board) were invited to discuss coordinating and collaborating together as a 'working group' to conserve the Bathurst caribou herd through short and long-term management planning processes. The organizations present discussed a "grassroots approach" in which Aboriginal harvesters from the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Saskatchewan would gather to discuss the Bathurst caribou herd. During a follow-up call in August 2012, the working group organizations noted that there was a strong desire to bring together all harvesters of the Bathurst caribou herd to guide management activities.

On January 29-31, 2013, the Tłı̄chq̄ Government and Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board co-hosted the Bathurst Caribou Harvesters' Gathering in Behchokò and Yellowknife, NT. The aim of the Gathering was to share knowledge across cultures and landscapes and make recommendations to decision-makers. The workshop was designed to provide 'grass-root' people, specifically elders, harvesters and youth, with a rare opportunity to engage with each other on issues of common concern to them. More than 100 participants took part in the Gathering to share common experiences about the Bathurst caribou herd. After two days, participants reviewed a compilation of ideas put together as recommendations that were developed based on discussions at the Gathering. These were reviewed in group discussions by each regional delegation and were provisionally approved by consensus of the Gathering as a whole, pending distribution of the draft workshop report and feedback from community review. The final workshop report, *"Bathurst Caribou Harvesters' Gathering, January 29-31, 2013"*, is attached.

On October 2-3, 2013, the working group met to review the results of the Bathurst Caribou Harvesters' Gathering and follow-up engagement with communities and to identify next steps. As there is no existing mechanism that brings all the necessary interests together to understand and address the key issues facing the management of the Bathurst caribou herd, the organizations agreed that they must work towards a common respect for and understanding of the various perspectives of caribou users across the herd's range. Further, the working group discussed the development of a mechanism that could be used in working together to manage the herd. Each participant agreed to be responsible for communicating the results, gaining feedback, building support for the proposed direction and reporting back to the working group their findings. The final workshop report, *"Workshop Results: Exploring Issues of Working Together for the Bathurst Caribou Herd, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, October 2013"*, is attached.

A follow-up workshop was conducted on February 12-13, 2014, to further discuss the nature of the proposed mechanism for cooperative management. The working group identified the need to

establish a mechanism, such as a caribou management board, that would bring organizations together to work on long-term management and conservation of the Bathurst caribou herd for future generations. A sense of urgency to establish this proposed mechanism was expressed. Specific questions about the mandate, make-up, authority, decision-making process and funding of the mechanism were discussed. The working group determined that a preliminary draft Terms of Reference for the proposed mechanism should be prepared for review with organizations and communities. The working group agreed to meet again to share feedback and address issues arising from the preliminary draft Terms of Reference, with representation by decision-makers. The final workshop report, *“Workshop Results: Understanding a New Mechanism for Sustaining the Bathurst Caribou Herd for Future Generations, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, March 2014”*, is attached.

To date, a preliminary draft Terms of Reference has been produced and is expected to be shared at a workshop this fall with decision-makers.

It should be noted that the Bathurst caribou long-term management planning process is being conducted concurrently with the Bathurst caribou range planning process. It is expected that the completed Bathurst Caribou Range Plan will be used as a guide by the proposed mechanism.

As well, although a Bathurst Barren Ground Caribou Management Planning Agreement was signed in April 2000 and a Bathurst Caribou Management Plan was drafted in November 2004 by the Bathurst Caribou Management Planning Committee, the Management Plan was never implemented.