



May 12, 2009

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The use of Bait in Outfitted Harvest of Black Bears

At its Board meeting May 8th, 2009 the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) reconsidered its initial position on True North Safaris Ltd. (TNS) application for a General Wildlife Permit to bait black bears in Unit R, south of Behchokò. The WRRB considered a submission from ENR in a letter dated May 7th, 2009. WRRB staff were advised that a letter from Lands Department, Tłıchq Government to ENR on the preliminary screening, dated April 21, 2009 should be considered Tłıchq Government's position on this matter.

WRRB has revised its initial position made at its April 3rd, 2009 board meeting based on the submission made by ENR and Tłıchq Government's position. Key issues related to the proposal and considered by WRRB include:

- Permit terms and conditions last year were not met by the Outfitter. And after review, ENR staff decided that the violations weren't serious enough to proceed with charges;
- ENR and Tłıchq Government are willing to approve another year's operation and work with the Outfitter to obtain compliance with all terms and conditions;

- The preliminary screening did not identify any environmental impact or public concern issues;
- The uncertainty with respect to bear habituation to artificial food sources as leading to increase incidence of bear-human interactions;
- An anticipated increase in future applications given the current economics of caribou outfitting; and,
- The need for the Board to formulate a position on this outside of the consideration of this specific application (including the need to research the science behind bear baiting, talk to other jurisdictions where this activity takes place, and the need to facilitate or undertake both scientific and traditional knowledge research on black bears) .

After much discussion and careful consideration the Board made the following recommendation:

Motion #61-08-05: To recommend to ENR that:

- a) The use of bait in harvesting black bears proceed this season (2009) by TNS and that ENR officials work with TNS to ensure the conditions outlined in Tłı̨chǫ Government letter of April 21, 2009 are met, along with those that follow from the WRRB (including appropriate design, location, signage, record keeping requirements and types of bait) such that ecological effects are minimized and public safety is preserved to the satisfaction of the WRRB and Tłı̨chǫ Government;
- b) The number of inspections in the 2009 season is increased and corrective action be taken immediately if TNS is found in violation or if there are any inconsistencies between the permit and the activity;
- c) Should the proponent wish to carry out the same activity for the 2010 hunting season they file an application by December 2009 to allow adequate time to consider and consult on the proposal; and,
- d) ENR, Tłı̨chǫ Government and WRRB initiate research into the cultural and spiritual significance of black bears, as well as the basic biology and ecology of black bears in Wek'èezhii to help further assess the potential impacts of this type of harvesting.

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If you have any questions related to these recommendations, please do not hesitate to call our office.

Sincerely,



Alfonz Nitsiza
Chairman