

June 12, 2009

Sent to all parties (Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Yukon, Government of Canada, Vuntut Gwitch'in Government, NaCho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Inuvialuit Game Council, Gwich'in Tribal Council)

Dear ...:

Re Porcupine Caribou Herd Harvest Management Plan

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) is pleased to recommend the enclosed Porcupine Caribou Herd Harvest Management Plan. As you are aware, the Board has been engaged in a Harvest Management Strategy process for the past several years. This Harvest Management Plan is one important piece of the overall Harvest Management Strategy that includes the following:

- Protocol Agreement
- Harvest Management Plan
- Native User Agreement

All parties signed on to the Protocol Agreement in February 2007, thus committing to the Harvest Management Strategy and working together to develop the Harvest Management Plan and Native User Agreement.

This Harvest Management Plan represents the hard work of the Harvest Management Plan Working Group and continued participation of all parties and user communities over the past year and a half.

The Working Group presented a final draft of its plan on June 1 at the PCMB meeting. The Board appreciates the extensive effort and dedication of the Working Group in working with user communities and organizations to develop this plan, including undertaking an extensive community engagement tour in September and October 2008.

The Board is pleased that consensus among the parties was reached on almost all issues. Where consensus was not achieved, the Working Group presented options for consideration by the Board. Those options have been considered along with the stated positions of the parties, and the Board has made

determinations in the best interest of both the caribou and the user communities overall.

The delineation of the colour zones was not entirely agreed to by all parties. Based on the options and background presented by the Working Group, the PCMB deliberated and came to a decision with respect to the recommendation of the following colour zones and corresponding management actions:

Colour Zone	Population Range	Management Actions
Green	115,000 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No harvest limit (aboriginals) • Licensed hunters – 2 bulls only
Yellow	75,000 to 115,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary bull only harvest • Voluntary reduction of harvest • Licensed hunters one-bull only
Orange	45,000 to 75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest limit • Mandatory bull only harvest
Red	45,000 and below	No hunting

The Caribou Calculator was used as an important tool in the consideration of harvest management planning. The Board values the work of the technical professionals who assisted with the development and use of the Caribou Calculator. It must be emphasized, however, that the Caribou Calculator was intended to be used as a discussion tool to consider the effects of different harvesting regimes on the herd.

Charts 1 to 4 (pages 17 and 18) in the plan are based on the information presented using the Caribou Calculator at the Inuvik Harvest Management Planning Workshop in the fall of 2007. It was based on the best information that we had available at that particular time and was used to predict the effect of different harvest regimes on the herd. Chart 5 on page 19 is based on an updated version of the Caribou Calculator that incorporated monitoring data collected since 2007. It is important to realize that the Caribou Calculator is a

model that will need to be updated as new information is gathered. According to the plan, in years when there is no photocensus, the herd size will be estimated using the Caribou Calculator. Note that this is merely an estimate to start discussions at the Annual Harvest Meeting. The confidence in that estimate will be reduced the further we are from the last successful photocensus. The Caribou Calculator estimates can be improved with better data on the number and sex of caribou being harvested. Again, this Caribou Calculator is just one tool that informs the decision-making process.

Without reservation, the Board recommends this plan as the best way to address concerns related to conservation of the herd in terms of long-term productivity and usefulness of the Herd for present and future generations, as outlined in the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*. Consistent with the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, it is critical to ensure the long-term continuation of the caribou while at the same time providing for the needs of harvesters.

The Board is convinced that cooperative management will be necessary for the success of any harvest management regime in the range of the herd. It requires the cooperation and support from all parties and user communities to meet its objectives. Chart 5 in the Harvest Management Plan (page 19) shows what we can expect to achieve from the implementation of this plan now. If we were to begin harvesting only 3,000 caribou (4% of 75,000 per year) with 80% of the harvest being bulls and if the cow survival did not increase, the herd is predicted to stabilize at about 75,000 caribou. The Board considers this to be a reasonable expectation of the user communities and is encouraged by the indication that user communities have already begun to implement appropriate management actions, including voluntarily limiting cow harvest and reducing overall harvest. It is recommended that measures be implemented (eg. check stations and game guardians) to monitor voluntary management actions, in order to verify their success and identify where more education may need to be undertaken. It should be noted that although voluntary actions are called for in the plan, this does not preclude parties from implementing more restrictive actions in their jurisdictions, should they feel that is warranted.

Consensus was not reached by either the Working Group or the PCMB with respect to the matter of total allowable harvest allocation. Although the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* identifies the PCMB as the body to establish the total annual allowable harvest for the Porcupine Caribou Herd [S. J.3(a)] and the determination of the allocation of the annual allowable harvest on the Porcupine Caribou Herd [S. J.3(b)], the Harvest Management Plan currently only sets the allocation between the Yukon and NWT users. The Board is of the view that it would be more appropriate to use the Native User Agreements and, in the Yukon, a government-to-government process between the Government of Yukon and self-governing First Nations in Yukon to resolve the issue of further sub-allocation of the annual allowable harvest in each jurisdiction (see page 27 of the plan).

On the matter of sale, trade and barter of Porcupine Caribou meat, the Board will be considering the comments received from user communities during the community engagement tour and will be working to develop related guidelines that it will recommend to the parties in the near future, in accordance with the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*.

With respect to including Alaskans in harvest management of Porcupine Caribou, the Board is strongly of the opinion that the International Porcupine Caribou Board should be reactivated. This would enable the cooperative management of the herd throughout its entire range, in accordance with the international board's mandate. Including Alaska in management planning will ensure the success of an expanded harvest management regime. The Board recommends that the Government of Canada and other governments in the range of the herd urge the US to follow through with their commitments and responsibilities under the *Plan for the International Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* and appoint members to the international board.

At this time, the Board is pleased to recommend this Harvest Management Plan to all parties and hopes that all parties are in a position to sign this agreement to show their support and commitment to the plan and management actions identified therein. The PCMB is eager to proceed to the finalization of this plan, as are all parties. To that end, the Board recommends a summit of leaders to finalize and sign the final document in early to mid-August. If this is acceptable to all parties, the Board offers to assist with logistics to organize such a meeting and be a resource to the parties.

Recognizing the role of the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (North Slope) and Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (NWT), the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board in wildlife management in the Northwest Territories and Yukon, this plan is being copied to those bodies as well.

It is noteworthy that harvest management is just one factor — albeit essential — in overall management of the herd and its habitat. The Board looks forward to the finalization of this Harvest Management Plan and the continued cooperation of the parties as partners in the co-management of this important herd and its habitat.

Sincerely,

Joe Tetlichi
Chair, Porcupine Caribou Management Board