

Conference of Management Authorities (CMA)

Meeting Minutes, May 11-12, 2021

Time: 9:00am – 5:00pm Zoom Teleconference

Attendees	Organization
Jody Pellissey	CMA Chairperson/Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board
Kaytlin Cooper	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Sam Bullock	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
William Koe	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Jozef Carnogursky	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Heather Sayine-Crawford	Environment and Natural Resources
Bruno Croft	Environment and Natural Resources
Brett Elkin	Environment and Natural Resources
Joanna Wilson	Environment and Natural Resources
Sheraz Daher	Environment and Natural Resources (observer)
Allie Mayberry	Acho Dene Koe First Nation
Jessica Hurtubise	North Slave Métis Alliance
Bruce Laurich	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Rosemin Nathoo	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Allison Thompson	Species at Risk Committee Member (Polar bear presentation only)
Stephanie Behrens	Tłı̨chǫ Government
Leon Andrew	Sahtú Renewable Resources Board
Patrick Riley	Kátł'odeeche First Nation (KFN)
Claire Singer	Former Species at Risk Secretariat, presenting CCVA - SAR
Michele Grabke	Species at Risk Secretariat
Mélanie Routh	Species at Risk Secretariat

1. Introductions – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Roundtable introductions.

Introduced Mélanie Routh, Species at Risk Secretariat.

Observer request for Sheraz Daher granted for this meeting.

2. Agenda – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review of draft agenda.

Agenda approved with changes.

3. Minutes from last meeting – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review and approval of draft minutes from February 2021.

Review and approve draft minutes from February 2021. Approved with minor changes and additions (GRRB and TG updates).

Conference of Management Authorities – meeting minutes, approved

4. Review of action items – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

Review of action items from previous meetings and earlier outstanding action items.

5. CMA decisions made since last meeting – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

Review of decisions made since February 2021 meeting.

6. Updates from Members – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Updates, if any, from members and participant/observing organizations. Updates were incorporated into the meeting minutes.

In the February meeting only three members provided updates (WRRB, GRRB and GNWT; TG has since provided their update). The agenda for the May CMA meeting did not include updates from members. Does the CMA want to continue with member updates?

Options going forward:

- Continue with verbal updates (February and/or May) that would be captured in the minutes
- Continue with written updates (February and/or May)
- Only do Implementation summary updates (February)

Decision D20210511-01: The CMA decided that member updates add value and are worth continuing. During the regular February meeting annual progress updates on implementation will be provided by Management Authorities. Annual progress updates on implementation will be provided verbally during in-person and teleconference meetings. During the regular May meeting member updates will be provided in writing to the Secretariat prior to the meeting. During in-person meetings, member updates will be provided verbally. In any case, the annual progress updates on implementation and the member updates will be included in the meeting minutes.

7. Annual Reports – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review/approve CMA annual report and ENR SAR(NWT) Act annual report.

- (a) 2020/21 CMA annual report approved. Will be submitted to the Legislative Assembly for tabling this fall.
- (b) ENR's 2020/21 *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* annual report
 - The ENR annual report has not yet been submitted but will be sent to the CMA in the next couple of weeks. This annual report is a submission regarding regulations, agreements, permits, and exemptions to regulations or permits.

8. CMA Chair – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review chair and alternate chair term positions.

- Jody Pellissey was re-appointed to the role of Chairperson of the CMA and Mr. Jozef Carnogursky was appointed the role of Alternate Chairperson. These appointments were each for a term of 2-years (February 20, 2019 to February 19, 2021).

Decision D20210511-02: Decision to re-appoint Jody Pellissey to the role of Chairperson of the CMA and Mr. Jozef Carnogursky as Alternate Chairperson. These appointments are each for a term of 2-years (February 19, 2021 to February 19, 2023).

9. Species at Risk Committee (SARC) – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

Updates to SARC membership, review/approve proposed 2022-2026 Species Assessment Schedule and presentation on SARC Assessment Process and Objective Biological Criteria (OBC).

SARC memberships currently being considered or upcoming:

- Member/alternate appointed by SRRB:
 - o Leon Andrew, SARC membership expires May 30, 2021
 - o Leon Andrew, SARC Chairperson expires May 12, 2021
 - o Deborah Simmons, SARC membership expires May 30, 2021
 - o Suzanne Carriere, SARC Alternate Chairperson expires May 12, 2021
- ECCC is revisiting appointing a Government of Canada member.

Action A20210511-01: SRRB to discuss SARC membership and Chairperson position and provide an update by Thursday to the Secretariat.

Attendance by members appointed by ENR on the advice of the Northwest Territory Metis Nation was brought to the attention of the CMA by SARC. There was a recommendation to have ENR approach the Northwest Territory Metis Nation to inform them that the member and alternate appointed on behalf of the Northwest Territory Metis Nation have not attended a SARC meeting since January 2017. CMA members stated that we do not have good dialogue or representation if people are not attending. The GNWT will contact the Northwest Territory Metis Nation to discuss. The CMA thanks SARC for bringing this to our attention.

Action A20210511-02: The GNWT will up with NTMN on SARC memberships (member and alternate).

Review and approve SARC's proposed 2022-2026 Species Assessment Schedule: SARC submitted the proposed 2022-2026 Species Assessment Schedule on April 30, 2021 to the CMA.

Red-sided garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) was added for assessment in 2025. This species is considered rare in the NWT with a small population at the northern limits of its range. Red-sided garter snakes migrate between winter denning sites (known as hibernacula) and summer ranges. There are only two hibernacula currently known in the NWT. Threats are considered moderate for this species and include disturbance or destruction of denning sites and road mortality.

Common muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) was added for assessment in 2026. Muskrats are found throughout the NWT in wetland habitats and are considered a culturally important species. Declines have been observed in the Mackenzie River Delta based on trapper reports and push-up (shelter) to muskrat ratios. There is also concern that climate change, pollution, habitat change, and changing

animal community structure (increasing beaver and otter numbers) could be affecting muskrat populations in the Mackenzie Delta and Sahtú. The extent of population change is unknown.

Currently, four species are scheduled for assessment/reassessment in 2023, to help manage the number of assessments/reassessments in a single year SARC recommends the 2023 re-assessment of Northern leopard frog be moved from 2023 to 2024 when two other amphibian species will be assessed/re-assessed (Canadian toad and Western toad).

In the submission letter SARC also provided recommendations regarding monitoring and management of lowbush cranberry, red-sided garter snake, muskrat, and rusty blackbird.

In summary:

- 2022 – peregrine falcon, woodland caribou (boreal population) (re-assessment), and Peary caribou (re-assessment)
- 2023 – Dolphin and Union caribou (re-assessment), hairy braya (re-assessment) and American white pelican
- 2024 – Canadian toad, western toad (re-assessment) and northern leopard frog (re-assessment)
- 2025 – lowbush cranberry and red-sided garter snake
- 2026 – wood bison (re-assessment) and muskrat

After discussing SARC's recommended assessment schedule, the CMA agreed with moving amphibians to the same year and suggested that hairy braya may need to be pushed back until a survey can be completed. The CMA also suggested further changes to balance the workload.

Regarding lowbush cranberries, some members were surprised that lowbush cranberries were on the assessment schedule. Cranberries may have been low a few years ago, but over the past 3-years they seem to have rebounded – everyone is picking cranberries now. I am not so sure it is a concern; it may be more of an observation due to environmental conditions (precipitation) not a trend in cranberry abundance. CMA recommends removing cranberries from the 2022-26 assessment schedule but keeping this species in mind understanding that climate change may be influencing cranberries.

Some members were also surprised by the addition of muskrat to the assessment schedule. However, other members reiterated the concerns heard by SARC regarding number of muskrat push-ups and harvest numbers. The importance of muskrat as a source of income was stressed and there are people that depend on muskrat every spring. Members recommended looking at the trapping results for trends across the NWT and across regions soon to help inform the assessment. Investigating the causes of apparent declines is also recommended. The CMA felt that there should be enough information for a status report and suggested moving the muskrat assessment sooner than recommended by SARC.

Regarding Peary caribou, the GNWT suggested incorporating new information from the federal recovery strategy into the status report. There have been challenges accessing that information during the draft stages of the peary caribou status report. However, once the federal recovery strategy is completed, that information should be included in the status report. SARC can include new information after the 6-month public review period as well as at the time of the assessment.

The CMA revised the assessment schedule as follows:

YEAR	SPECIES
2022	peregrine falcon woodland caribou (boreal population) (re-assessment) Peary caribou (re-assessment)
2023	Dolphin and Union caribou (re-assessment) American white pelican
2024	hairy braya (re-assessment) muskrat
2025	Canadian toad western toad (re-assessment) northern leopard frog (re-assessment)
2026	wood bison (re-assessment) red-sided garter snake

Decision D20210512-03: Decision to revise 2022-2026 Species Assessment Schedule to balance workloads including: moving the re-assessment of northern leopard frog from 2023 to 2025 (extend listing by 2-years), moving the re-assessment of hairy braya from 2023 to 2024 (extend listing by another 1-year), and moving the re-assessment of Western toad from 2024 to 2025 (extend listing by 1-year). As well, assess muskrat in 2024 and red-sided garter snake in 2026.

Under paragraph 44(2) of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, if a re-assessment of a listed species cannot be completed in sufficient time to allow the CMA to make a decision on term extension prior to expiry of the current term, the Minister may, before the listing expires, extend the term.

Action A20210512-03: Secretariat to draft letter to the Minister to extend the listing end date of hairy braya, Northern leopard frog and Western toad as follows:

- **Hairy braya** – reassessment from 2023 to 2024; extend listing by another 1-year (from February 27, 2025 to February 27, 2026)
- **Northern leopard frog** – reassessment from 2023 to 2025; extend listing by 2-years (from March 19, 2025 to March 19, 2027)
- **Western toad** – re-assessment from 2024 to 2025; extend listing by 1-year (from February 25, 2026 to February 25, 2027)

Presentation of SARC Assessment Process and Objective Biological Criteria: The *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* requires that SARC periodically review the objective biological criteria with the CMA. The Secretariat provided a brief introduction to the revision in December 2020. In April 2021 SARC applied the new process and criteria for the Polar Bear re-assessment. In March, SARC issued a press

release regarding the new process and objective biological criteria and sent letters to COSEWIC and IUCN regarding these changes.

Action A20210512-04: The Secretariat will request the presentation on the SARC Assessment Process and Objective Biological Criteria for distribution to the CMA.

10. Polar bear – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

SARC presentation re: polar bear assessment results from April 2021 meeting.

SARC provided a presentation summary of the April 2021 re-assessment results for polar bear (Special Concern) in the NWT. Prior to beginning the assessment, SARC reviewed and approved the species status report. Status reports are required to present the best available Indigenous, community, and scientific knowledge for the species. The preparers for the polar bear status report were Dan Slavik and Dr. Philip D. McLoughlin who presented Indigenous and community knowledge and scientific knowledge components, respectively.

Polar bears are greatly respected and are a culturally, spiritually, and economically important species to the Inuvialuit. Polar bears live mostly on the sea ice (hiku (U = Uummarmiut, K = Kangiryuarmiut), siku (S = Siglit)) of the Arctic Ocean and Beaufort Sea, but will den, travel, and occasionally feed on land. Polar bears are opportunistic predators and their diet consists mainly of ringed (natchiq (U, S) nattiq (K)) and bearded (ugruk (U), ugyuk (K, S)) seals. Female polar bears age at first reproduction is between 4-6 years old and females generally have 1-2 cubs, with triplet litters being rare except under very good conditions (lots of seals). Most males, however, do not enter the reproductive segment of the population until they are 8–10 years old. Cubs are born in maternity dens generally between November and early January.

Polar bears are solitary, live at very low densities, cover large ranges and constantly move to find ideal ice conditions and seals. Polar bears are distributed throughout the circumpolar Arctic and, as previously mentioned, rely on sea ice as their primary habitat. The distribution of the polar bear extends from the North Pole to include sea ice and coastal areas of Russia, Norway, Greenland, the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, east to the Labrador coast, south to James Bay, and west to the Bering Sea. In North America, polar bears are considered resident species in Alaska, Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Greenland

There are four recognized subpopulations (or “management units”) of polar bears within the NWT:

- Northern Beaufort
- Southern Beaufort
- Viscount Melville Sound
- Arctic Basin

The main range and habitat of polar bears in the Northwest Territories (NWT) is in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). The ISR includes the coastal regions of mainland NWT and the Yukon North

Slope, as well as the Arctic islands of the NWT. The distribution of polar bears where they occur in the NWT is continuous. Polar bears can cover a huge range in search of prey and mates and are known to be capable of swimming long distances in open water.

Polar bears' key habitat requirement is sea ice from which they hunt ringed and bearded seals. Polar bears depend on sea ice not only for feeding but also for seeking mates, breeding, travel, and in some cases for denning. Variable sea ice conditions affect the seal population and distribution, and ultimately, the bears' behaviour, body condition, and distribution – although the relationships among these factors are complex. Population (SK): Estimating the NWT-only polar bear population is challenging due to:

- Shared subpopulations: NWT polar bears are from four subpopulations that are shared with Alaska, Yukon and Nunavut.
- Outdated information: Estimates for NWT polar bears rely on data collected within its territorial boundaries from 2006, or earlier.

The best estimate is that NWT currently supports no more and likely less than 1,000 mature polar bears within its territorial borders, at any given time. But this leaves out an unknown number of polar bears from the Arctic Basin subpopulation and does not remove any Northern Beaufort Sea bears that should be assigned to Nunavut, rather than NWT.

Population (ICK) Polar bear abundance changes from year to year and from region to region. Studies based on Inuvialuit knowledge suggest that, as of 2018, the Northern Beaufort, Southern Beaufort, and Viscount Melville subpopulations are stable, and that the Northern Beaufort and Viscount Melville subpopulations may even be increasing. It is important for hunters to avoid speculating about the future. The future is unknown, and because of this, it is believed that one should be humble about one's abilities to predict what will happen, and not expect any one particular outcome over another.

Adaptations to Environment/Physiology and adaptability: Polar bears are highly intelligent and very adaptable. The most notable aspect of polar bear physiology relates to the ability of polar bears to fast for long periods of time spent on land during the ice-free season. Without access to seals, polar bears can rely primarily on stored energy reserves until the sea ice forms again in late autumn. (For instance: females may not eat for up to 8 months while waiting for young to be old enough to move from the den to the ice). Polar bears are opportunistic predators and their diet consists mainly of ringed (natchiq (U, S) nattiq (K)) and bearded (ugruk (U), ugyuk (K, S)) seals. Polar bears are also known to access natural sources of food outside of their regular diet; polar bears can extend their diet to several species of mammals and birds, meat caches, and vegetation including berries. Polar bears experience relatively high natural survival rates, and survival can often be distinguished based on age or stage of life history.

A threats assessment was completed by SARC prior to the assessment. Seven primary threats were identified, ranging in overall impact from Low to Medium-high.

Threat 1 – Climate change (Medium-High) –

- Knowledge holders have observed declines in multi-year ice and changes in sea ice from multi-year to annual ice pack. In addition, polar bears are not as big as they used to be and are more often consuming the entire seal (as opposed to the blubber only), suggesting nutritional stress. Polar bears may be adjusting their range further north and further out on the multi-year ice. Some polar bears have also recently been observed travelling further inland than in the past.
- Climate change has had an intensifying effect on polar bears and their habitat. There is broad concern that climatic conditions may alter denning habitat or render previously important habitats unsuitable, and influence polar bear condition, reproduction and prey availability.
- Scientific observations indicate a climate change-driven decline in summer extent of sea ice and ice thickness throughout much of the Arctic since 1970. Changes are ongoing, with winter Arctic sea ice extent continuing to decline. Most recent models predict that by 2050, the Arctic will be ice-free in September.

Threat 2 – Marine traffic (Medium) – The opening of the Northwest Passage to marine traffic is seen as having the potential to be one of the most serious threats to polar bear habitat. In all likelihood and within our lifetime, due to changing climate patterns, the Northwest Passage will remain open for increasing periods of time, making it attractive as a major shipping route. The number of transits increased from four per year in the 1980s to 20-30 per year in 2014-2019.

Threat 3 – Pollution (Low-Medium) – Pollution and contamination are being more frequently observed, especially in the form of marine plastics. In recent years, significant levels of various contaminants (organochlorines and other persistent organic pollutants) have been documented in polar bear tissues or tissues of their prey, particularly adipose tissue.

Threat 4 – Human-bear interactions and harvesting (Low) – In all parts of the NWT, the harvest (including defence of life and property kills) of polar bears has been below the quota for many years. Harvesting and human-caused mortality are not, at this time, considered threats to the NWT polar bear population. However, one likely impact of climate change is an anticipated increase in human-bear conflicts. Increases in bear interactions with humans in areas most affected by climate warming have been reported in recent years. Reductions in food availability may result in increases in nutritionally stressed bears spending longer periods of time onshore. If bears become nutritionally stressed because of changes to their habitat and prey availability. This could lead to an increase in defence of life and property kills.

Threat 5 – Offshore oil and gas exploration and development (Low) – Since the mid-1960s, exploration for energy and mineral reserves has led to an increased amount of industrial activity in the Arctic. The primary threat to polar bears from industrial development may come from the potential for environmental contamination, especially large-scale oil spills. There is also the potential for negative impacts to seals from seismic research and blasting. Increased development

may result in changes in the migrations of not only the polar bear but all the marine mammals along the Beaufort Sea.

Threat 6 – Invasive research techniques (Low) – Concerns are held about scientific research methods, whereby bears are immobilized using drugs, and helicopters and snowmobiles are used to capture bears. These activities may cause displacement of bears or result in long-term, adverse physiological effects. Inuvialuit-Inupiat refuse to collar polar bears and Inuit communities and organizations do not support invasive research techniques. Although invasive research techniques are not currently happening in Canada, they are occurring in Alaska. Researchers in the NWT are working on field research programs using the genetic mark-recapture. Although this method involves pursuing polar bears by helicopter to biopsy dart them from a distance, there is no physical handling or immobilization of the bear. In addition, there are protocols in place to avoid disturbing sows and cubs.

Threat 7 – Competition (Low) – There is evidence of grizzly bears expanding their range in northern Canada. The greater competitive ability of the grizzly bear may be of concern when the two species come into contact with one another. Although there is no evidence that grizzly bears are playing a significant role in displacing polar bears within the species' current area of occupancy, the more generalist feeding strategy of grizzly bears might potentially provide this species with a competitive foothold on Victoria Island or on other Arctic islands.

Positive influences for polar bear include:

- Inuvialuit have been managing their interactions with polar bears since time immemorial and have codes of conduct, traditional practices, and bylaws in place to ensure harvesting practices are sustainable. The precautionary principle is applied to quota decisions to ensure that wildlife populations will not be negatively affected by the harvest.
- Landmark agreements like the 1988 Inuvialuit-Inupiat Agreement and the 2006 Kitikmeot-Inuvialuit Polar Bear Management Agreement promote transboundary management and knowledge sharing.
- In 2017, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region Polar Bear Joint Management Plan was completed. This plan was developed to meet the requirements of a management plan under the territorial Species at Risk (NWT) Act and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Yukon and NWT) regional component of the national management plan under the federal Species at Risk Act while respecting the joint management process legislated by the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA).
- Community conservation plans have been developed and recently updated for all six Inuvialuit Settlement Region communities. These plans identify critical habitat, community uses, and conservation objectives, to inform future decision making.
- In recent years in the NWT, researchers have been exploring less invasive research techniques, including biopsy mark-recapture methods which are currently underway in the NWT.

Assessment history: The NWT Species at Risk Committee met in December 2012 and assessed Polar Bear as a species of Special Concern in the NWT because of concerns about the long-term impacts of climate change and other threats. In 2014, Polar Bears were listed as Special Concern in the NWT under the Species at Risk (NWT) Act. An Inuvialuit Settlement Region Polar Bear Joint Management Plan and Implementation Table for Actions on Management of Polar Bears in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region were completed in 2017.

SARC met on April 15-16, 2021 and assessed the biological status of polar bear in the Northwest Territories. The assessment was based on this approved status report. The assessment process and objective biological criteria used by the Species at Risk Committee are based on Indigenous and Community Knowledge (ICK) and Scientific Knowledge (SK). This April 2021 re-assessment was the first time SARC applied the new Assessment Process and Objective Biological Criteria and the outcome was considered a success.

Using both ICK and SK assessment criteria, SARC determined that polar bear is a species of Special Concern in the NWT. The re-assessment reflects concerns that changing climatic conditions may alter polar bear denning habitat, render previously important habitats unsuitable, and/or alter polar bear movements and range. Changes to the quality and quantity of polar bear habitat may negatively influence polar bear condition, reproduction and prey availability – these changes have been associated with declines in some polar bear subpopulations.

Other threats to polar bear include invasive research techniques, pollution, potential offshore development of hydrocarbon reserves, increased ship traffic, transportation and service corridors, increased pathogens, changes in foraging ecology and other cumulative effects.

As part of the assessment and in its review of the best available Indigenous, community, and scientific knowledge, SARC also submits the following recommendations for consideration by the CMA:

- **Encourage and support ongoing ICK research** to provide critical long term on-the-ground observations that will help understand annual changes and be useful for species assessment.
- **Continue to enhance on-the-ground community-based monitoring** to systematically monitor and document change (consistent with the Inuvialuit Settlement Region Polar Bear Joint Management Plan).
- Work with partners to **develop and implement protocols for industry and shipping traffic through the Northwest Passage** to minimize disturbance to polar bears.
- Work with partners to effectively **resource and implement tools to mitigate climate change impacts on polar bear** and ensure that Canada and NWT uphold the international climate change agreements.
- Work with partners to ensure that the Canadian offshore oil and gas moratorium is reviewed on schedule and that **polar bear and seal continue to be protected from negative effects of oil and gas offshore development.**
- **Complete and publish results of population surveys in a timely manner.**

- **Enhance research on complex systems associated with climate change** and how polar bear respond to changes to sea ice.

The CMA discussed whether **conservation actions** are required immediately (this is an option for the CMA as soon as a species is assessed, even prior to listing, in situations where they feel that actions need to be taken immediately, as per S. 56 of the SAR (NWT) Act). Conservation action consensus agreements become an available tool as soon as a species has been assessed (these are considered pre-listed species) but can be used at any point in the process. No conservation actions were suggested during the meeting that require action through a consensus agreement on conservation action.

There is a 60-day period in which the CMA can **request clarification** from SARC. If the CMA would like to submit a request for clarification on this re-assessment, the request should be submitted to SARC by June 28, 2021. SARC will respond within 30 days. This process is available to any management authority or the CMA in the first 60 days of receiving an assessment. The clarification can be on the reasons for the assessment decision, but not the process used for the assessment. The request must be in writing. SARC's response will be published on the website.

The draft **actions needed to prepare** for a CMA consensus agreement on listing (actions to prepare) document was presented to the CMA. Management Authority revisions to this document are due by July 28, 2021. Recall that the management authorities for polar bear are the WMAC (NWT), and GNWT.

With these timelines, the **consultation/engagement** period will be August to November 2021. This year, with Covid-19, social distancing, and uncertainties associated with when restrictions may be lifted – the CMA will need to think about contingencies or alternative solutions if travel and face to face meetings are not yet permitted. The CMA confirmed that they would like the usual consultation/engagement package from the Secretariat (i.e. fact sheet, template presentation, template letters, and newspaper/radio/online ads for ENR's public engagement).

As this is a re-assessment, a consensus agreement must set out the following information:

- That the CMA has reached a consensus
 - To remove the species from the List if the CMA considers the species not at risk,
 - To add another 10-year term to the current expiration date for the species in the same category, or
 - To list the species in another category
- If the CMA has reached a consensus on subparagraph (a)(ii) or (iii), the actions Management Authorities agree to undertake with respect to adding another 10-year term or listing the species in another category, as the case may be.

Timelines for polar bear:

- April 28, 2021 – SARC provided the re-assessment of polar bear to the Management Authorities.

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- June 28, 2021 – deadline for CMA to request clarification from SARC on the assessment (60-day period). SARC will respond within 30 days.
- July 28, 2021 – deadline for the actions needed to prepare for a CMA consensus agreement on listing. (due within three months after SARC provides an assessment to CMA)
- August-November 2021 – consultation/engagement period
- September 17, 2021 – CMA check-in regarding consultation/engagement period (optional meeting)
- December 10, 2021 – CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- April 18, 2022 – Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- April 28, 2022 – deadline for consensus agreement on adding another 10-year term.

Action A20210511-05: The Management Authorities will submit their actions to prepare for the Polar Bear consensus on listing to the Secretariat by July 28, 2021.

11. The Species Conservation and Recovery Fund (SCARF) – led by Jessica Hurtubise (SCARF member)

General updates. Call for applications January 15 – March 15, 2021

SCARF 2021/22 Application Period: The 2021/22 application period for the fund opened January 15, 2021 and closed March 15, 2021. Eight projects were awarded funding for a total of ~\$56,000. A summary of the approved projects was presented:

1. Barren-ground caribou harvest data collection, Athabasca Denesuline
2. Culture and science camps, Deh Gah School
3. Boreal caribou habitat enhancement, Deninu Kue First Nation
4. Whooping crane education and awareness, Ecology North
5. Bank swallow surveys, Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
6. Bluenose-West caribou hunting and knowledge exchange, Inuvik HTC
7. Rare vascular plants of the NWT, Laurie Hamilton
8. Community-led Species at Risk detection: eDNA sampling in traditionally important water bodies of the North Slave Region, North Slave Métis Alliance, Yellowknife

12. Species at Risk Communications Strategy – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

Progress update.

Status of SAR branded beverage: Recall that based on suggestions and interest from CMA members, the Secretariat pursued the development of a species at risk branded beer with NWT Brewing Co. in Yellowknife. The target species for this year will be the 5 ecotypes of caribou in the NWT: Barren-ground caribou, Boreal caribou, Dolphin and Union caribou, Northern mountain caribou, Peary caribou)

- **Name:** Five Antlers Ale (available at the NWT Brewing Co./Woodyard, off sales, liquor store sales in cans)
- **Update target release date:** early spring 2021 (delays were encountered)

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- The working group came up with a range of **merchandise**: for purchase at the pub (t-shirts, buffs, dish towels), disposable collateral (coasters, tent cards), and product specific give-aways/swag (koozies).
- The Secretariat is working with the NWT Brewing on the release event details. It sounds like the brewery will have a dedicated website for the collaboration.
- Communications requests:
 - o Social media jpeg and blurb (like SCARF)
 - o Any other requests?
 - The Secretariat and communications will work on initial material to prepare the spokesperson to help with media requests, particularly regarding the consumption of alcohol.
- Recall that NWT Brewing Co. was going to donate partial proceeds to caribou conservation in the NWT – please send the Secretariat suggestions/recommendations to provide to NWT Brewing. The list of suggestions will be provided to NWT Brewing Co.

Action A20210511-06: The Secretariat will work with communications to develop material to prepare the spokesperson to help with media request. Material will be previewed by the CMA.

Action A20210511-07: The CMA will submit suggestions/recommendations regarding donation of partial proceeds to caribou conservation in the NWT to the Secretariat by May 28, 2021.

Status of conservation in art project:

- On Friday, September 25 a subset of the CMA formed a jury committee that reviewed the Conservation in Art submissions and all pieces of art that were submitted will be included in the art show. There were 11 submissions.
- Professional photos were taken of the work and a photobook was planned.
- The project was not able to finish as planned due to various setbacks encountered by the project lead.

What is next for SAR communications? The projects indicated above for species at risk in 2019-2020 are wrapping up. The CMA is encouraged to think of next steps in Species at Risk (NWT) communications. Suggestions so far include:

- Revisions/updates to the website
- Developing short clips explaining the SAR process
- Further defining what Species at Risk in the NWT is
- An initiative to celebrate Indigenous concepts associated with species at risk

Action A20210511-08: The CMA will discuss future NWT Species at Risk communication strategies/initiatives during the February 2022 meeting.

13. Work plan – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Updates on upcoming activities.

The table below outlines the CMA/SARC workplan over the next 5-years and includes type of activity and species.

Year	Activity	Species
2021	Listing	Listing of northern mountain caribou (29 July 2021)
	Assessment	Polar bear (re-assessment)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Hairy braya
2022	Assessment	Peary caribou (re-assessments)
		Boreal caribou (re-assessments)
		Peregrine falcon
	Progress Reporting and Review	Boreal caribou
		Northern leopard frog
		Western toad
2023	Assessment	American White pelican
		Dolphin and Union caribou (re-assessment)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Polar bear
		Dolphin and Union caribou
	Management Plan/Recovery Strategy	Northern mountain caribou (management plan)
2024	Assessment	Hairy braya (re-assessment)
		Muskrat
2025	Assessment	Northern leopard frog (re-assessment)
		Western toad (re-assessment)
		Canadian Toad (assessment)
	Management Plan/Recovery Strategy	Peary caribou (adoption of Federal recovery strategy by September 30, 2024)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Wood bison
2026	Assessment	Wood bison (re-assessment)
		Red-sided garter snake

14. Bats – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Approval of implementation consensus agreement.

The draft *Consensus Agreement Respecting Implementation of the Management Plan for Bats in the NWT* was provided to the Minister on April 9, 2021. Management Authorities for bats (SRRB, WRRB, Tłı̨ch̨ Government, and GNWT).

15. Barren-ground caribou – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Development of implementation consensus agreement. Approval of implementation consensus agreement.

The draft *Consensus Agreement Respecting Implementation of the Recovery Strategy for Barren-ground Caribou in the NWT* was to the Minister on April 9, 2021. Management Authorities for barren-ground caribou (WMAc-NWT, SRRB, GRRB, WRRB, Tłı̄chǫ Government, and GNWT).

May 2021 update on federal listing process from ECCC: There are two outstanding meeting that we are still planning on holding virtually in Nunavut; Rankin and Gjoa Haven. Assuming we can go ahead with those meetings it will then go to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) in September meeting, then to the minister after that.

16. Northern mountain caribou – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Approval of consensus agreement on proposed listing. Discussion on preparation of a management plan.

Background information about the two plans:

- [The national Northern Mountain Caribou management plan](#) is a high-level strategic plan, with objectives and recommended management approaches that apply to the entire NWT range of northern mountain caribou. It was developed collaboratively with input from workshops involving Gwich'in, Sahtú and Dehcho participants, as well as a Steering Committee and a Technical Working Group. Co-management partners, including transboundary groups, were brought to the table multiple times from the beginning and throughout the planning process. The process took over 3 years (approx. 2008-2012). The plan acknowledges that herd-specific or regional management plans may be developed if needed.
- [Nío Nę P'ęnę Begháré Shúhta Goxepé Narehǫá](#) – This Indigenous-led caribou conservation plan covers Shúhtaot'ı nę / Shúhta Dene né né / kayeh – a large area spanning both sides of the Yukon/NWT border (in the Sahtú region) and encompassing the Mackenzie Mountain barrens – an expansive, high alpine, tundra plateau near the headwaters of the Keele, Mi hcho Tsíé Dá (Caribou Cry), Hess, Turáji Dá (Twichya), and MacMillan Rivers. The plan is rooted in traditional Dene values, principles and knowledge. It outlines a vision, scope, values to be protected and sustained, threats, and ways of monitoring progress. It is currently a draft.

The Management Authorities agreed to adopt the *Management Plan for the Northern Mountain Population of Woodland Caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Canada* as a nested approach using the national management plan as a high-level umbrella plan covering the entire NWT range. In addition, the CMA will point to the community-led plan (Nío Nę P'ęnę Begháré Shúhta Goxepé Narehǫá) as an important regional initiative that gives applied direction on how to conserve caribou in the area of the Sahtú that is covered by the plan.

Conference of Management Authorities – meeting minutes, approved

The Secretariat will investigate next steps required to adopt the national management plan. Then the Management Authorities will meet to discuss a path forward.

Timelines for northern mountain caribou:

- **April 29, 2021** – the Consensus Agreement on listing provided to the Minister of ENR
- **July 29, 2021** – legal listing of Northern mountain caribou
- **April 29, 2023** – Consensus Agreement accepting management plan
- **July 29, 2023** – Management plan must be completed
- **April 29, 2024** – Consensus Agreement on implementation due

The proposed listing of northern mountain caribou involved GRRB, SRRB and GNWT. All three Management Authorities approved the listing of northern mountain caribou as a species of Special Concern.

The press release is schedule for July 29, 2201 and was provided in draft to the CMA for review and approval. The press release was approved during the meeting.

17. Dolphin and Union caribou – led by Isabelle Duclos (ECCC)

Progress update on federal listing process.

Background: Dolphin and Union caribou is currently listed under *SARA* as a species of Special Concern (2011). In 2017, the species was reassessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as Endangered.

February 2021 update on federal listing process from ECCC: We had a public meeting scheduled in Cambridge bay in February – cancelled due to COVID. New board members were elected, and they were briefed on DU and Peary caribou. We will be contacting WMAC and regional wildlife boards on the up listing of DU caribou.

May 2021 update on the federal listing process from ECCC: ECCC is exploring an option with partners to address the concerns expressed during the consultations in 2019. This would be to collaboratively write an unsolicited status report with co-management partners to submit to COSEWIC. Currently having calls/meetings with partners (NWT/NU) to see if they are interested/supportive or not.

18. Peary caribou – led by Isabelle Duclos (ECCC)

Progress update on federal recovery strategy. CMA decision on NWT recovery strategy extension.

CMA approved extending the completion date of the Peary caribou recovery strategy to September 30, 2024.

Background Peary caribou (WMAC-NWT and GNWT): Peary caribou were listed under the *SAR (NT)* Act in February 2014. For efficiency and to avoid duplication, the CMA anticipated adopting the applicable portions of the federal recovery strategy for Peary caribou once it was completed. Three

extensions were granted (2015, 2017, 2019) with the last one indicating a completion date of December 31, 2021. On that timeline, the CMA consensus agreement to accept the Peary caribou recovery strategy would be due in September 2021. ECCC is hoping for approval by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board in September 2021 – this will not leave enough time for the CMA to review the recovery strategy for adoption.

[February] Update on federal recovery strategy from ECCC: ECCC consulted with the HTC and HTOs early in 2020 on the latest version of the Peary caribou recovery strategy and the identification of critical habitat. Only sea ice crossings had been identified as critical habitat for this species. WMAC-NWT, IGC, GNWT and GN supported the posting of the proposed recovery strategy on the federal registry for public consultations. The recovery strategy was officially sent to Ottawa at the end of November, so it should be posted in June or July for a 90-day consultation period. The consultation period will be 90 days instead of the usual 60 days due to COVID. Once consultation is completed, the next step is to submit the recovery strategy to the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) and this is anticipated to happen in December 2021. If NWMB does their own consultations, then it may delay completion of the recovery strategy by about 6 months (~January to June 2022). Similarly, if the NWMB requests significant changes, then ECCC will go back to the other partners and propose those changes. The CMA will have an opportunity to see those changes before the document is posted as final. Considering all of these steps, the CMA should have the final RS in fall 2022 at the latest (hopefully).

[May] Update on federal recovery strategy from ECCC: ECCC was planning to post as proposed this summer and this is still the plan.

19. Hairy braya – led by Michele Grabke

Field work update, progress report and recovery strategy review.

Field work is not going to happen this year, there is still a lot of uncertainty going on.

Progress Reporting: Under **section 73(1)** of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, the CMA must submit a progress report every five years, or sooner if so required by a management plan or recovery strategy, on the actions undertaken to implement a management plan or recovery strategy and on the progress made towards meeting objectives.

Recovery strategy/Management plan review: **Section 74** states that the CMA shall review a management plan or recovery strategy every five years. The first of these progress and review documents is due in November 2021 for Hairy braya.

Update:

- CMA provided feedback on the draft progress report structure and format by **March 5th**.
- Hairy braya Management Authorities will meet on **March 11, 2021** to review the hairy braya recovery strategy.

Conference of Management Authorities – meeting minutes, approved

- The draft hairy braya progress report and review documents were provided to management authorities May 10, 2021.

Upcoming progress reports and reviews:

- **November 2022:** Boreal caribou, Northern leopard frog, Western toad
- **March/December 2023:** Polar bear, Dolphin and Union caribou

**20.Presentation: Wildlife Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment – Phase 1, Species at Risk (CCVA)
(presentation by Claire Singer)**

Presentation.

Reflecting the significant and widespread current and projected impacts of climate change in the NWT, in October 2017, the Office of the Auditor General found that the GNWT had not adequately identified risks associated with climate change for the territory's wildlife (among other things). As part of the GNWT's response to the Auditor General's recommendations, Claire has been developing a Wildlife Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment: Phase 1, Species at Risk (CCVA). This CCVA provides a broad overview of the vulnerability of NWT species at risk to climate change and other threats.

Given its relevance to species at risk, the GNWT has given its permission for Claire to present the results of the CCVA to SARC prior to its anticipated publication later in 2021.

Claire will let the CMA know when the publication is available.

21.Next meeting – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Scheduling for upcoming meetings.

- **September 17, 2021:** in preparation for consultation/engagement for Polar bear listing with management authorities.
- **December 10, 2021:** to review consultation/engagement results from fall & progress report/review.
- **February 22-23, 2022** in Inuvik or ZOOM (to be decided in December).