

**Conference of Management Authorities
Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy
Meeting Minutes
Conference Call, April 11, 2016**

Attendees:	Organization:
Jody Pellissey, Chairperson	Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board
Fred Mandeville	Environment and Natural Resources
Joanna Wilson	Environment and Natural Resources
Lynda Yonge	Environment and Natural Resources
Kaytlin Cooper	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Ron Allen	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Peter Redvers	Kátl'odeeche First Nation
Sjoerd van der Wielen	Tłı̨chǫ Government
Rob Gau	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Lisa Worthington	Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy preparer
Claire Singer	Species at Risk Secretariat

Introduction to the purpose of the meeting (led by Jody Pellissey, Chairperson).

- Opportunity for each Management Authority to summarize the results of their consultation and engagement on the draft NWT Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy and to provide direction to the report preparer regarding how the final report should be modified to reflect the results of this consultation/engagement.

Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT):

- Circulated three documents on April 5, 2016: (1) summary of consultation and engagement results, (2) detailed consultation and engagement results, and (3) suggested amendments to the recovery strategy framework. Reviewed the summary of consultation and engagement results with the Conference of Management Authorities (CMA), which includes comments from within the GNWT, from s35 consultation, as well as comments from the public.
 - Issue: alternative management tools (e.g., predator management, alternate prey management, maternity penning, large-scale predator exclusion, translocation).
 - Not recommended for the NWT at this time. GNWT suggests adding section to the recovery strategy indicating that these tools that are being used for boreal caribou populations elsewhere and that they are available to the NWT to pursue should there be a need in the future. This section should make it clear why these tools aren't being recommended at this time (NWT still has the opportunity to address the root causes of threats to boreal caribou).

- Should be noted that some of these tools (i.e., predator management) are already being used for barren-ground caribou and apply throughout the territory.
- Suggestion to include research on harvest of boreal caribou calves in the spring by bears, perhaps under a 'continuing research' section.
- Inquiry regarding a wolf/barren-ground caribou feasibility study. Is this strictly limited to barren-ground caribou?
 - Yes, it will look exclusively at barren-ground caribou. However, interactions between wolves and boreal caribou could be flagged for later.
- Issue: clarification (edits to improve the text).
- Issue: conservation areas and land use planning (recovery strategy should recognize the value of creating protected areas and conservation zones in land use plans for boreal caribou habitat protection).
 - GNWT suggests adding a management action to support the completion of land use plans and the protected/conservation area planning process, especially for lands identified as having value for boreal caribou.
- Issue: disturbance-predator-prey relationship (should be better explained, especially the role of alternate prey, and needs to recognize that questions remain about how this relationship works in the NWT).
 - GNWT suggests addition of text to better explain this relationship.
- Issue: federal critical habitat (concerns about 65% critical habitat threshold and impact on development, disagreement with the 65% threshold, concerns about long-term planning for development in the context of critical habitat, and suggestions to improve specificity of 65% threshold implementation).
 - GNWT noted that this topic constituted the majority of comments received during consultation/engagement.
 - GNWT clarified that the 65% threshold arose from the federal *Species at Risk Act* and recovery strategy, not the territorial one. Earlier, the CMA gave direction that they wanted the NWT recovery strategy to recognize this national critical habitat requirement and the work that we will need to do to meet it.
 - GNWT suggests adding a new section called 'Consideration of National Species at Risk Legislation' to better explain the relationship to national critical habitat requirements. Also suggests adding a new management approach to the strategy that recognizes the ability to improve/refine threshold values as new

information becomes available. Details of implementation are not appropriate in the recovery strategy. Regional habitat targets will be addressed in range plans. GNWT suggests adding a management action specifying that the range planning process will address this.

- Does range planning then become the primary tool for decision-making and long-term development planning? Or is it one of a bundle of tools?
 - One of a bundle. There's an approach called 'manage human-caused landscape disturbance' – the GNWT is recommending adding range plans there as a guide when considering boreal caribou habitat.
- Speaking to the seasonality of those range plans - to what degree will that be built into the range plans?
 - It can be somewhat addressed through the range plan process - showing how there will be enough habitat for boreal caribou throughout the year. But perhaps timing of activities is more appropriately dealt with through the regulatory process. A lot of detailed parts of the range plans are not articulated in the recovery strategy; those will be spelled out in the range plans themselves. Did suggest adding a management action that makes it clear that specific tools/mechanisms to manage disturbance will be identified through the range planning process and may differ depending on the area.
- Issue: fire management (e.g., selective timber harvesting).
 - GNWT suggests a new management action to explore the use of fire management tools for the maintenance of high value caribou habitat areas (e.g., values at risk, landscape-level prescribed burns, fire breaks, fuel management).
- Issue: goal statement (unclear and perhaps too harvest-focused).
 - GNWT suggests that rather than changing the goal, add some text to explain each of the key ideas in the goal statement.
- Issue: guiding principles (some disagreement with the principles).
 - GNWT suggests that no changes be made. The guiding principles were discussed and agreed to by the CMA and are consistent with other legislation and agreements.
- Issue: habitat decision-making processes (regarding relationship to the GNWT's land use decision-making processes, and suggestion that

ecosystem-based management should be used in lieu of a single-species approach).

- GNWT suggests adding text to (1) clarify that decisions by the GNWT and others should be informed by the range plans and (2) indicate that regulatory authorities and caribou management agencies should provide leadership in considering boreal caribou habitat supply when making decisions, and also suggests editing the text to clarify the NWT's legal obligations under the federal Species at Risk Act regarding critical habitat protection. Finally, the GNWT suggests adding a management action to explore concepts of ecosystem-based management.
- Issue: habitat restoration and regeneration (active restoration of habitat following human disturbance).
 - GNWT suggests a management action to review and update best practices on habitat restoration and to research the effectiveness of habitat restoration techniques for boreal caribou.
- Issue: harvesting (concerns about current harvest levels in some regions, harvest impact being downplayed in the recovery strategy, and need for better harvest data and hunter compliance).
 - GNWT suggests editing the text to better reflect concerns about harvest levels and adding a management action recommending a review of the Big Game Hunting Regulations. GNWT also suggests adding another management action about promoting compliance with hunting regulations, and using more specific wording about developing formal reporting systems for Aboriginal harvest.
- Issue: implementation (e.g., importance of implementation, funding, partnerships, capacity, responsibility, etc.).
 - GNWT suggests adding a management approach and actions to increase capacity, both human and financial. Details of implementation however, should not be included in the recovery strategy; they will be included in the subsequence implementation consensus agreement.
- Issue: improving information (disagreement with 'threatened' status, concerns about the information used to determine 'threatened' status, need for better information, need to recognize different disturbance impacts, etc.).
 - GNWT noted that the established assessment and listing process was used to determine a status of 'threatened'. This was done using the best available traditional, community and scientific knowledge, consultation/engagement, and in accordance with the

Species at Risk Committee's objective biological criteria. Further noted that Environment Canada's 65% threshold was based on extensive analysis of the relationship between boreal caribou and habitat condition. Regular reviews of the recovery strategy and the range plans allow for adaptive management. Knowledge gaps are acknowledged in the strategy.

- GNWT suggests adding text to more clearly explain disturbance impact variation and that more information is needed on how specific types of disturbance influence habitat quality. Further suggests adding a management action to compile and improve existing records of human-caused landscape change and another management action to work with land and water boards, land managers and industry to ensure appropriate information on activities in boreal caribou habitat is submitted, compiled and made publicly available.
 - Questions raised during meeting – what about climate change?
 - Climate change is addressed under section 3.2.6.

- Issue: measuring habitat disturbance (i.e., defining disturbance).
 - Although the recovery strategies uses Environment Canada's definition of disturbance, the GNWT suggests adding a management action to develop criteria to determine which types of human development activity will contribute to the disturbance footprint for boreal caribou and criteria to determine when disturbances have become functional caribou habitat again.
- Issue: population delineation and monitoring (e.g., scaling of regional population information, continuous range questions).
 - Population monitoring is already in the strategy, but the GNWT suggests a new management action to explore methods for using local population trend information to estimate the trend of the NWT's population as a whole. Add text and a management action to more clearly explain why a single, continuous population is being used, and to acknowledge the information gap regarding possible subpopulation structure.
- Issue: population thresholds for management
 - GNWT suggests editing the text to clarify that we are recommending exploring options for population thresholds but that we're not at a point where we're ready to implement them.
 - Question raised during meeting - Where is the idea of 'when do we do something' going to show up (i.e., this and this

trigger a management response)? How is that going to be defined and when?

- When we discussed this at the CMA meeting, thinking about other caribou management plans (stop lights), people were wondering whether we should explore that. It's not immediately clear what data you would use or what the appropriate triggers would be because we don't have the same kind of information about boreal caribou. So that's why the idea of population thresholds is retained (steps to get there), rather than actually including them.
- Issue: referencing (want all information referenced, instead of cross-referencing to the status report).
 - GNWT notes that earlier, the CMA agreed that the status report was the primary information source and the recovery strategy should not cite all the primary information sources again. For statements flagged by commenters as problematic, specific reference can be added or the statements deleted/modified.
- Issue: role of regulatory system (strategy needs to recognize importance of the regulatory system)
 - GNWT suggests adding text to address this concern (explain role of regulatory system) and adding management actions to work with applicants prior to submitting their applications, developing terms and conditions for use by the regulatory bodies, developing guidelines/regulations under the *Wildlife Act*, and developing products to facilitate habitat consideration (e.g., habitat screening tool).
- Issue: use of traditional knowledge (suggestions to strengthen the role of traditional knowledge in the strategy).
 - GNWT suggests editing the text to strengthen this idea and acknowledge the sensitivities around use of traditional knowledge. Add a management action to make it clear that traditional knowledge needs to be brought to the decision-making table.
- Issue: working with others (cross-boundary coordination with other partners).
 - GNWT suggests adding a management action to foster better collaboration with industry as a partner in research and monitoring. Add s35 consultation as a management action. Include non-government organizations as parties to collaborate with.

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT): no concerns/comments.

Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board:

- Received quite a bit of feedback during consultation/engagement, but they were already addressed through the GNWT's proposed actions.
- The GRRB is concerned about the 65% critical habitat threshold. They feel that the threshold should be higher.
 - Noted that the 65% threshold is a minimum and there's certainly room for that threshold to be higher in certain regions.
 - The fact that regional variations in the threshold will be covered in the range plans should be mentioned in the recovery strategy.
 - Should also be aware that range planning work has already started, but the focus is an overall document that will apply to everyone and then smaller-scale in the South Slave and Dehcho regions.
 - Also some concern expressed that in some areas the minimum threshold may already have been exceeded and that despite this, no management actions have yet been triggered.

Tłı̨chǫ Government: no concerns/comments.

Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board:

- Conducted joint consultation with the Tłı̨chǫ Government.
- Majority of comments have been addressed through the GNWT's proposed actions. Only remaining topics are communication, involvement of communities, and information sharing. Suggests that these topics should be specifically addressed in the recovery strategy.

Kátl'odeeche First Nation:

- Expressed that the most important point is that management actions must be developed cooperatively and collaboratively with Aboriginal organizations. The updated draft recovery strategy allows for this to happen and certainly addresses most of their other comments/concerns.

Next steps:

- The final draft recovery strategy will be circulated to Management Authorities approximately 2 weeks prior to the May 11-12, 2016 meeting in Yellowknife.
- During the May 2016 meeting, Management Authorities will be asked to determine whether the changes made to the recovery strategy are sufficient in scope to warrant additional consultation and whether the strategy is ready to be put to the Management Authorities for approval.
 - These are things each Management Authority needs to determine for itself when they see the next version of the recovery strategy.
 - Everyone should come to the May 2016 meeting prepared to make these decisions.

Approved May 11, 2016

- The consensus agreement accepting the recovery strategy must be signed and submitted to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources by November 2016.