

Attendees	Organization
Jody Pellissey	CMA Chairperson/Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
Laura Meinhart	Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
Larry Carpenter	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Robert Charlie-Tetlichi	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Darren Campbell	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Manisha Singh	?ehdzo Got'Iné Gots'É Nákedí (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board) (via Zoom)
Joanna Wilson	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Kelby Ogryzlo	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Earl Evans	Northwest Territory Métis Nation
Levi MacDonald	Salt River First Nation (via Zoom)
Michele Grabke	Species at Risk Secretariat
Joslyn Oosenbrug	Species at Risk Secretariat

1. Introductions – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Roundtable introductions

Called to order at 2:36pm.

2. Agenda – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review of draft agenda

Agenda approved. Changes/additions include Item 7 – additional discussion on SCARF priorities.

3. Minutes – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review and approve draft minutes from December 2023

Minutes approved without changes.

4. CMA Alternate Chairperson – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Designating an Alternate Chairperson

Alternate Chairperson

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As per the rules of conduct, the CMA may designate an Alternate Chairperson. This position is currently vacant. The Secretariat put a call out to the CMA to put names forward for an Alternate Chairperson by January 5, 2024. No names were submitted.

A second call out for names to be submitted to the Secretariat by **April 15, 2024**.

[Action 20240220-01: CMA to submit names for Alternate Chairperson by April 15, 2024.](#)

5. Review of action and decision items – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Review of action items from previous meetings and earlier outstanding items

An overview of action and decision items was provided in the meeting binder.

6. CMA Rules of Conduct – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Review and discuss potential updates to the rules of conduct

The CMA Rules of Conduct are to be reviewed annually. The Secretariat is seeking advice from the CMA on revisions to the Rules of Conduct. The Secretariat will be updating Environment and Natural Resources/ENR to Environment and Climate Change/ECC.

Please submit comments/revisions to the CMA Rules of Conduct to the Secretariat by **April 15, 2024**. The revised CMA Rules of Conduct will be drafted to include in the CMA binder for approval at the May meeting.

[Action 20240220-02: CMA to submit comments/revisions on the CMA Rules of Conduct to the Secretariat by April 15, 2024.](#)

7. Species Conservation and Recovery Fund – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Call for applications, project update and subcommittee membership

[SCARF Subcommittee Membership](#)

In January, SCARF welcomed Darren Campbell of the GRRB who joined the subcommittee following the departures of Jess Hurtubise (NSMA) and Jodie Maring (WMAC-NWT). The subcommittee now has a full complement of members going into the application review

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period in March. Thanks Darren! Members are: Aimee Guile (WRRB), Brett Elkin, (GNWT), Catarina Owen (SRRB) and Darren Campbell (GRRB).

SCARF 2024-25 Application Period

The 2024-25 application period for the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund opened January 15, 2024, and closes March 1, 2024. Two applications have been received so far and there have been a couple of requests for information. A meeting date to review applications has been scheduled for March 26.

SCARF 2023-24 Projects

The Secretariat checked in with SCARF recipients in November to get an update on 2023-24 projects. If projects cannot be completed, funds may be reallocated to other projects. Four of the seven projects reported being on track; a fifth had fieldwork affected by the forest fires but anticipated being able to complete proposed spending on other aspects of the project. Secretariat has not heard back from the Salt River First Nation or WMAC (NWT).

Secretariat will send Levi (SRFN) an email request and he will seek an update on the project from the CEO; Jodie Maring will be able to provide an update for WMAC-NWT. Secretariat to follow up.

Reporting for 2023-24 projects is due April 30, 2024. As there has been significant staff turnover at some of the organizations that received funding, a reminder will be sent out March 1, 2024, well in advance of the deadline.

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SCARF Program Review

Currently, the Fund supports projects that address threats, fill knowledge gaps or contribute to outreach and education. However, most of the projects funded to date (and applications received) have been for education or awareness projects that do not contribute directly to the well-being of the target species. The SCARF subcommittee recognizes the need for a broader range of applicants/applications that target priority gaps in information/action as laid out in management plans and recovery strategies. The extreme wildfire season in 2023 also highlighted the need for additional research on the impacts of wildfire on species at risk (in particular, species in the South Slave region).

The subcommittee is seeking direction from the CMA on how best to focus SCARF funding to explicitly target **threat abatement/mitigation** and **fundamental research on species ecology** in the NWT.

Options could include:

- Removing education and awareness projects from consideration for funding (i.e. only accepting projects targeting threats or knowledge gaps).
- Setting aside a portion of the funding for education and awareness projects, with the majority of funding for projects that directly benefit species conservation and CMA objectives.
- Focusing funding on species that are not typically priority for research and monitoring dollars (e.g. bats, amphibians). Note that focusing on certain species could limit the ability of some regions to apply for funding.

Any changes to application forms and evaluation would take place next year and apply to applications for 2025-26 projects.

Action 20240221-03: CMA to provide input on options for revising SCARF to focus funding on threat mitigation and research/knowledge gaps by April 15. Preferred option to be provided to CMA for decision at May meeting. The subcommittee for the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund will subsequently revise the SCARF application and other materials as per direction from the CMA.

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8. Species at Risk Committee – led by Secretariat

Membership updates and Species Assessment Schedule

Membership

Updates to SARC membership include:

- **Bobby Migwi** appointed as regular member by WRRB (effective February 2, 2024)
- **Darren Campbell** appointed as regular member by GRRB (effective January 31, 2024)
- **Robert Charlie-Tetlichi** appointed as alternate member by GRRB (effective January 31, 2024)
- **Kelby Ogrzylo** appointed as a regular member by the Government of Canada (CWS) (effective January 31, 2024)
- Resignation of **Rosemin Nathoo** as a regular member by (WMAC-NWT) (effective January 19, 2024)

Vacancies on SARC for regular and alternate members include:

- One alternate member to be appointed by SRRB
- One regular member to be appointed by WMAC-NWT
- One alternate member to be appointed by WMAC-NWT
- Up to 3 members to be appointed by GNWT

SARC has also requested members with expertise in traditional knowledge research.

Updates from appointing organizations on vacancies:

- **SRRB:** No update at this time. Seeking clarification on process of appointment and how to determine candidates for an alternate member.
- **WMAC-NWT:** WMAC-NWT is meeting next week and should have more information.
- **GNWT:** Have been working with a candidate with a background in traditional knowledge research and are working through the Minister’s office for this appointment. Hoping this person will be in place in time for April meeting. Another member was appointed on the advice from NWTMN and that has expired so we have sent a letter for a new member. A letter has also been sent to the DFN to recommend a member for appointment.



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Action 20240221-04: CMA will continue working to fill SARC vacancies.

Status Report Updates

There are currently three status reports in progress.

- **In final revision before being provided to SARC for review:**
 - Hairy braya (2024 reassessment)
 - Red-sided garter snake (2024 assessment)
- **In progress with contractor:**
 - Amphibians (includes western toad, northern leopard frog and Canadian toad)
– this will be a multi-species status report. (to be assessed in 2025)
- **Upcoming status reports (procurement process to begin in May/June):**
 - Muskrat (scheduled for assessment in 2026)
 - Cranberries (scheduled for assessment in 2026)
 - Wood Bison (scheduled for assessment in 2026)
 - Barren-ground caribou (scheduled for assessment in 2027)

Updates to SARC Rules of Conduct

Similar to the CMA reviewing its Rules of Conduct, SARC will also be reviewing its Rules of Conduct. Once updated, the Rules of Conduct will come to the CMA for review but not for approval.

Updates to SARC Guidelines and Instructions for Status Reports

SARC is also working on updating its *Guidelines and Instructions for Status Reports* to align with SARC's revised assessment process and criteria.

9. Consensus Agreements – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson) *In principle agreement.*

Dolphin and Union caribou – Summary of engagement results and Annex B

- **WMAC (NWT):** The Council will be meeting next week to discuss. Not able to get into Sachs and Ulukhaktok for the community tour but this should not impact the ability

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of WMAC (NWT) to sign the consensus agreement. Rosemin previously did a lot of work with these communities but since she left most work has been on hold. Will be meeting with Ulukhaktok in June and will discuss further.

- **GNWT:** Has provided final text on engagement results for Annex B.

Timelines

- **December 2023:** CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- **January 26, 2024:** Consensus Agreement Annex B’s (Actions the Management Authorities have undertaken or will undertake with respect to listing) are due in anticipation of the February 2024 CMA meeting.
- **April 15, 2024:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **May 1, 2024:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on listing in another category.
- **May 2024:** Secretariat to draft news release for listing Dolphin and Union caribou as Endangered, to be approved at May CMA meeting.
- **August 1, 2024:** Dolphin and Union caribou listed as an Endangered species. News release.
- **February 2025:** Should an extension be required, this can be put forward and approved at or before the February CMA meeting. Post notice of extension to website.
- **May 1, 2025:** Consensus Agreement on accepting recovery strategy.
- **August 1, 2025:** Recovery strategy completion date.

[Decision 20240221-05: Decision to approve in principle the Consensus Agreement to up-list Dolphin and Union caribou from a species of Special Concern to an Endangered species on the NWT List of Species at Risk. Any changes to Annex Bs \(actions undertaken with respect to up-listing Dolphin and Union caribou\) must be received by March 25, 2024.](#)

American White Pelican – Summary of engagement results and Annex B

- **GNWT:** Offered a public comment period on the potential listing of Special Concern and held a public meeting in Fort Smith in August. This was originally going to be part

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of the Whooping Crane Festival that was cancelled. Although the numbers of pelicans are increasing, because there is only one colony, the species may be vulnerable to disease and flooding (if the colony is impacted, the entire NWT population is impacted because they are one and the same). The GNWT received mixed feedback about whether to list pelicans. On one hand, the population is healthy and doing well. But there are also concerns about changes to water levels and need to look after the colony. GNWT is considering a decision **not to list**, primarily because the nesting area itself is in Alberta and the NWT has limited influence over decisions affecting the area.

- Earl Evans (Fort Smith resident, NWTMN) provided additional information that pelicans are increasingly widespread along the Taltson, Salt and Buffalo Rivers, eating a lot of fish and attracting eagles and hawks, which is impacting fishing by people in the area. He expressed support for a decision not to list. He also talked about a potential colony nesting on the Taltson River. There are hundreds of pelicans in the area, so it's expected that there is at least one nest along the river. GNWT has also heard reports of hundreds of pelicans feeding in the area but has not been able to confirm the presence of a nest in the NWT.

Timelines

- **December 2023:** CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- **January 26, 2024:** Consensus Agreement Annex B's (Actions the Management Authorities have undertaken or will undertake with respect to listing) are due in anticipation of the February 2024 CMA meeting.
- **April 15, 2024:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **May 1, 2024:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement.
- **May 2024:** CMA meeting – Secretariat to draft press release, if required.

Action 20240221-06: GNWT to submit Consensus Agreement Annex B (actions undertaken with respect to listing American white pelican) by March 25, 2024.

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Peary caribou Recovery Strategy – Summary of engagement results and Annex B

- **WMAC (NWT):** This has been a very long process – and now people are seeing the caribou coming back near Sachs Harbour. Another survey is planned for this spring. WMAC (NWT) will be talking about the recovery strategy at their meeting next week.
- **GNWT:** Conducted public engagement and sent letters to IGIOs. No concerns and GNWT anticipates being able to sign.

Timelines

- **January 2024:** Final version of the NWT recovery strategy provided to Management Authorities ahead of the February 2024 CMA Meeting.
- **January 26, 2024:** Consensus Agreement statements and Annex B table
- **April 15, 2024:** Start signatures for Consensus Agreement on Accepting/According.
- **April 29, 2024:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on Accepting/According the Recovery Strategy.
- **May 2024:** May meeting - CMA discusses and approves in principle the news release for recovery strategy.
- **July 29, 2024:** Minister of ECC provides the accepted/adopted recovery strategy to the Management Authorities and makes it public. News release.
- **September 30, 2024:** Legally required completion date for Peary Caribou Recovery Strategy.
- **April 29, 2025:** Consensus Agreement on Implementation due

Decision 20240221-07: Decision to approve in principle the Consensus Agreement to accept/adopt the recovery strategy for Peary caribou. Any changes to Annex Bs (actions undertaken to accept the recovery strategy) must be received by March 25, 2024.

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Northern mountain caribou Management Plan – Annex A and Statement

- **GRRB:** Most people in the GSA have not harvested these caribou in more than 20 years so for GRRB, this is mostly about education. The RRCs have an interest in protecting caribou. The board has agreed in principle to signing.
- **SRRB:** The SRRB is committed to implementing the Management Plan. Doing a lot of work on habitat (non-invasive monitoring) and gathering information through the public listening sessions and maintaining the Geospatial Hub, which provides the communities with a safe space for their knowledge. SRRB is still in the process of conducting community-based workshops on the GIS Hub. This work is ongoing.
- **GNWT:** Have looked at the actions and determined what we are already doing, what requires more resources, or actions we do not plan on implementing.

Timelines

- **January 26, 2024:** Consensus Agreement statements and Annex As (Actions the Management Authorities have undertaken or will undertake with respect to listing) are due in anticipation of the February 2024 CMA meeting.
- **April 15, 2024:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **April 29, 2024:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on Implementation.

Decision 20240221-08: Decision to approve in principle the Consensus Agreement to implement the management plan for northern mountain caribou. Any changes to Statements or Annex As (approaches partners intent to implement) must be received by March 25, 2024.

10. Progress Reports and Reviews – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Review and approve the workplan for the wood bison recovery strategy progress report and review and an update about the review of Dolphin and Union caribou management plan.

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Wood Bison Recovery Strategy Progress Report and Review

The workplan for the development of the NWT wood bison progress report and review was provided in the binder for review and approval.

CMA discussed how information is gathered on the herds (in particular the Slave River Lowland/Hook Lake abundance estimates and how changes to vegetation composition and wildfires are affecting the herds). Earl Evans from Fort Smith (NWTMN) discussed fewer occurrences of bison feces/poop than in past years and concerns that herds affected by wildfire may be starving or have moved elsewhere.

Earl (NWTMN) also provided further information on the landscape in the area following the 2023 wildfires and concerns over the impacts on red-sided garter snakes. Where there would typically be occurrences of snakes in the fall (typically hit by vehicles on the roads), there have not been any this last year. The extensive burn also means there is no habitat for snakes emerging from hibernacula (no food to eat). It was recommended that Claire Singer follow up with NWTMN (Earl Evans and Kenny Hudson) on the snake status report.

CMA noted the need to be inclusive of all management partners in progress reporting and review for wood bison (including Parks Canada). Secretariat to look into expanding this work to include membership of the wood bison working groups and working within existing processes/meeting schedules for working groups.

At least one of the management plans for wood bison is also undergoing review right now. Consider how this work could be aligned with the review of the recovery strategy.

Decision 20240221-09: CMA accepts the workplan for the development of the wood bison progress report and review, with the addition of management partners from the three (3) wood bison working groups and pending further consideration of how the review of the recovery strategy will align with the reviews of the three management plans.

Dolphin and Union Caribou Management Plan Review

A review of the Dolphin and Union caribou management plan was undertaken in 2023 as part of the legal requirement to review the management plan every five years (section 74 of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*). However, given the outcome of the 2023 assessment (Endangered) and pending territorial and federal listing decisions, management partners

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recognize that a more in-depth review of the management plan needs to take place after the listing decision. This review may form part of the process to develop a recovery strategy, if required. Next steps following a listing decision are discussed below.

11. Dolphin and Union Caribou (potential) Recovery Strategy – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Discuss and provide direction on the potential development of the Dolphin and Union caribou recovery strategy.

Discussion on the (Potential) Development of a Dolphin and Union Caribou Recovery Strategy

If Dolphin and Union caribou is listed as Endangered under the *Species at Risk (NWT)* Act, a recovery strategy is required within one year of listing. The Secretariat requested direction from the CMA on how to proceed with the review of the management plan (described above) and its intersection with a recovery strategy.

For consideration:

- The Dolphin and Union caribou management plan was developed together with partners across the NWT and Nunavut. Would a similar approach be taken for development of a recovery strategy?
- What level of engagement/community involvement is appropriate? Who would lead community engagement and compile input for the development of the recovery strategy? How would Nunavut communities be engaged? Who would pay for in-person meetings, if required? Capacity issues at the board level may be a factor.
- Under NWT legislation, there is no difference in the content of a management plan and a recovery strategy (unless recovery is determined not to be feasible).
- A federal listing decision for Dolphin and Union caribou is also pending (proposed uplisting from Special Concern to Endangered). If listed as Endangered, a federal recovery strategy would be required.
- A federal recovery strategy requires critical habitat for the species to be identified.

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- Timelines for federal processes are not as rigorous as NWT timelines. i.e. it may not be possible to coordinate with federal timeline. How then should these processes align?
- A user-to-user group was formed following the release of the management plan, that brings the communities on the DU caribou range together to share information. What is the status of this group? How can it be leveraged for the recovery strategy planning process?
- The 1-year timeline may not be feasible given capacity constraints and coordination with federal processes. If required, an extension should be approved by the CMA at or before the February 2025 CMA meeting.

Discussion with Management Authorities:

- **GNWT:** The original management plan was a joint effort (NWT, NU, Canada) because we all needed a management plan. If we wait for a federal uplisting decision, there becomes a mandate for everyone to have a recovery strategy. This would be the time to do a more comprehensive effort. The transboundary User-to-User group could be used to bring people together and help inform the process. We already have a management plan and can continue to use that and wait until capacity is back and we can all work together.
- **WMAC (NWT):** Supports the GNWT proposal to hold off on development of the recovery strategy until all groups are prepared to work together. Capacity has been an issue for WMAC (NWT) and that will improve this spring. As well, the User-to-User group is currently on hold but will be restarted once a biologist is in place. Restrictions on harvest (in NU and Ulukhaktok) are already in place so those parts are done. Some predator management is already underway as well.

[Decision 20240221-10: Decision to provide a notice of extension on the development of the recovery strategy for Dolphin and Union caribou following a listing decision in May.](#)



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12. American White Pelican Management Plan – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Discuss and provide direction on the potential development of the American white pelican management plan.

[Discussion on the American white pelican management plan](#)

As American white pelican will not be listed on the NWT List of Species at Risk, no management plan will be required.

13. Species at Risk Communications – led by Joslyn Oosenbrug (Secretariat)

Update on online platforms for NWT Species at Risk

[Announcement – the *NEW* NWT Species at Risk website is up and running!](#)

Joslyn provided an overview of the new website and a reminder to contact the Species at Risk Secretariat (Michele or Joslyn) if you have any issues with your login. The password reset function does not work. This has been flagged for the web developer.

[Social Media Content Calendar](#)

The Secretariat provides a quarterly calendar of social media content for approval by the CMA. The content is used to populate the NWT Species at Risk Facebook page and supplemented by shared posts from partner pages (e.g. WRRB, ECC, ECCC, TG, etc.). There are approximately 1-2 posts per week. The current content calendar for approval was provided in the meeting binder and covers April – June 2024. The next content calendar will be approved at the May meeting.

[Decision 20240221-11: Decision to approve the April – June 2024 social media content calendar.](#)

[Plain Language Calls to Action](#)

SARC recognizes that the revised species assessment process requires additional information (Indigenous and community knowledge about the species) to be able to fully apply the new ICK criteria. This additional knowledge will ideally be collected by a preparer of a status report

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on the species according to the revised SARC Guidelines and Instructions for Status Reports (see above). To ensure the required information is available to the preparer, SARC has identified the need for new communications materials and an information and awareness campaign to engage knowledge holders and help guide researchers working with ICK. Over the next few months, the Secretariat will be working with SARC to develop these materials, focusing on the importance of ICK in species assessment.

CMA identified ACCWM as an additional audience for these materials and another method for distribution. GNWT suggested when a draft status report is posted for 6-month review – this could also be a good time to put out some targeted questions for people to be able to contribute to the process.

NWT Species Report

GNWT is proposing to no longer publish the NWT Species report (which provides status and ranks for all NWT species as well as a general write-up; published every five years) and instead provide updated information on NWT species online only through the NWT Species Infobase. The GNWT is seeking input from CMA members on this decision and whether they use the NWT Species report.

WRRB: Uses the report but would be able to use the Infobase instead. Need to communicate the existence of the Infobase more widely.

GRRB: Had not seen the NWT Species report before and would not miss out if it were no longer published.

WMAC (NWT): Has seen the report but does not use it.

It was noted that it would be important to improve the usability of the Infobase (make it more user-friendly) if the decision were to get rid of the published document. The write-ups in the current document could instead be shared on the website (GNWT or SAR).

14. Summary of Implementation Activities – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson) *Updates on implementation activities from CMA members*



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The CMA provides annual/periodic reviews on implementation actions on management plans and recovery strategies. This information informs the 5-year progress reports and reviews (which are legally required under the Species at Risk (NWT) Act).

Management Authorities provided verbal high-level updates on implementation activities during the February CMA meeting. Management Authorities provide 3-4 highlights for each species for which they have management responsibilities (visual aids or presentations are optional). Management Authorities also provide written progress updates to the Secretariat, which are used to inform and populate species progress reports. The Secretariat will produce a summary of the annual (2023) implementation actions as a PDF for the May 2024 CMA meeting.

Hairy Braya – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):** Reviews information when it is brought forward; this is an ongoing activity.
- **GNWT:**
 - Summarized current land management tools that provide protection to hairy braya habitat
 - Analyzed 2022 survey results & updated coastal erosion rates – for SARC status report
 - Information sharing & outreach
 - Ecology North: classroom kit, teacher's guide & youth workshops at ISR schools
 - Media coverage about 2022 survey results
 - Video “Hunting the Hairy Braya”
 - Sharing plant specimens with Aurora Research Institute & IRC
 - Poster and plant database - "The Flora of Cape Bathurst and Baillie Island, NWT"

Amphibians – GRRB, SRRB, WRRB, GNWT

- **GNWT:**

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- Compiled and shared information for the upcoming SARC status report on western toad, Canadian toad and northern leopard frog
- Monitored wildlife with acoustic recording units (ARUs) through the Northwest Territories Biodiversity Monitoring Program
 - deployed along Mackenzie winter road, around Tulita and around Gameti
 - retrieved from Edehzhie, east of the Slave River and near Fort Smith, and around Norman Wells on both sides of the Mackenzie River
- Collected wood frog samples for a genetics study looking at genetic relatedness of wood frogs in different areas and their tolerance to freezing
- **NWTMN:** Expressed concerns about adequate engagement with the community on deploying cameras and determining locations.
- **GRRB:** Not a lot of activity from the GRRB on amphibians. Did get some information from RRCs on where to find amphibians. As well, any time the GRRB receives a permit application, they make recommendations on what can be done to protect species.
- **SRRB:** No updates.
- **WRRB:** The WRRB encourages reporting observations and provide info about amphibians and threats.

Boreal Caribou – All Management Authorities

- **GNWT:**

Preliminary data on habitat disturbance after 2023 wildfire season:

- 68% of NT1 range undisturbed (down from 72%)
- 24.3 % Wildfire disturbance (1984-2023) – up from 20.4% (1982-2021)
- 9.9% Human-caused disturbance (2020) - up from 9.1% (2015)

Range planning continues, negotiating new federal funding agreement. Completion targets:

- Southern NWT and Wek’èezhìi - 1st quarter of 2025
- Gwich’in - 4th quarter of 2025

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- Inuvialuit - 4th quarter of 2026
- Sahtú - 3rd quarter of 2027

GNWT received funding and began 5-year project: Landscape-Level Restoration Trial of Seismic Lines in Boreal Caribou Habitat in Southern NWT.

- Identify and prioritize seismic lines for restoration
- Trials of various restoration treatments
- Study how wolves and ungulates respond to regenerating seismic lines
- Actively involve Indigenous youth and land-users
- Publish a Boreal Caribou Candidate Restoration Site Inventory

- **WMAC (NWT):** At our next meeting we have two contractors that will update use on the boreal caribou indigenous knowledge study.
- **GRRB:** Wildlife studies, including linkage studies between caribou, moose and wolves. When we do reviews of permits, looking for tips for additional protective measures. Have also been determining what habitat should be set aside through use of Marxan analysis. This project is ongoing in collaboration with RRCs.

SRRB: SRRB is working with communities and GNWT on range planning. Engaged in boreal caribou research and reviewing research licences with involvement of communities. SRRB also did fieldwork to monitor habitat along pipeline right of way, winter road right of way and other significant sites. Planning for genome research field work in 2024. Currently, Trent University lab and ECCC are working towards conducting downstream analyses on the entire dataset to investigate spatial population structure, connectivity, and demographics across the study area.

The SRRB has organized public listening series, forum meetings, and study circles to gather input and discuss topics around caribou. The ongoing Dene Béré project and the upcoming Todzi regional workshop aim to encourage sustainable harvesting practices. The Public Listening Sessions also provide platforms for discussions on sustainable harvesting practices.

SRRB has collaborated with ECO Canada to provide Basic and Advanced Drone Training for Indigenous participants, enhancing environmental knowledge. Further,

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we have also partnered with external researchers to collect spatial information and are developing a Geospatial Hub to store this data.

- **WRRB:** Participated in range planning meetings throughout 2023. The interim range plan provides best practices for mitigation. Also working on a Wek’èezhìi Forest Management Plan together with the GNWT that will include guidance from the range plan.

Polar Bears – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **GNWT:**
 - 4th and last season complete for South and North Beaufort subpopulation surveys (genetic mark-recapture via biopsy sampling). Total of 415 individual bears identified. Focus is now on data analysis.
 - Pending IGC support, GNWT ECC plans to share polar bear tissue samples for genetic research:
 - Epigenetic aging - a promising technique for non-invasive aging of polar bears
 - DNA sequencing - to study historical population bottlenecks and increases, genetic diversity and resilience to climate change.
 - Recent research (ongoing and published) includes:
 - Polar bear DNA from paw-prints in snow
 - Climate change impacts on polar bears including individual health, population health and harvest risk
 - Polar bear pathogens and population connectivity
- **WMAC (NWT):** Harvest has been down for last 3-4 years. Costs too much to go out and the hides are not great condition. Research surveys recently analyzed. Submitted but needs to go through review. A lot of work with DNA sampling has been completed, and findings will be presented. Updates expected on VMS population and through the BearWatch program.
- Secretariat also received progress updates on polar bear management from **Parks Canada and ECCC**.

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Dolphin and Union Caribou – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **GNWT:**
 - SARC re-assessment as Endangered in NWT; Engagement on proposed up-listing; Published 5-year report on progress (collaborative NWT-Nunavut work)
 - Implemented new Olokhaktomut HTC bylaw for mandatory sampling and reporting of all caribou harvested on Victoria Island
 - Research & monitoring collaborations include:
 - Population survey flown in fall 2023 (led by GN, awaiting results)
 - Indigenous Knowledge of DU caribou through time
 - Health of muskox and DU caribou
 - Grizzly bear range expansion on Victoria Island – diet, genetics, distribution, habitat use
 - Wolf collaring on Arctic islands
- **WMAC (NWT):** Will be in Ulukhaktok in June. WMAC (NWT) has received requests from OHTC for more research on predators, so we are looking into this.
- **Earl Evans (NWTMN)** inquired about how far south DU caribou may be going and shared observations of a small group near Manchester Lake (south of Artillery Lake). 12 caribou were spotted in the area that were smaller and lighter in colour, more similar in size to a wolf. Hooves were hairy. They managed to shoot one. This was 2015 or 2018. Earl to look back in his notes to see if he can find a date and Joanna (GNWT) to check archived samples.
- Secretariat also received a progress update on DU caribou from **GN** and **KRWB**.

Wood Bison - GNWT, TG, WRRB

- **GNWT:**
 - Mackenzie, Nahanni and Slave River Lowlands each have a working group that develops and implements the herd specific management plan.
 - All 3 population specific working groups are active and met in 2023. Mackenzie WG is currently reviewing their management plan.

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- Anthrax outbreak in Slave River Lowlands - 30 carcasses found & incinerated during summer 2023. Anthrax also detected in Wood Buffalo National Park last summer (10 carcasses).
- Monitoring collared bison in Mackenzie population to study habitat use, range use, movements, and interactions with /use of the Tłicho Highway.
- Bison Integrated Genomics (BIG) project continues - goal is to help restore genetic connectedness among genetically isolated bison herds.
- **TG:** Not in attendance.
- **WRRB:** Attended working group meetings and working on 5-year review of Mackenzie Wood Bison management plan. Regulation amendment to extend season from March 15 to year-round open season. Board supports ongoing habitat monitoring through Tlicho Highway WMMP.

Bats – GNWT, WRRB, TG, SRRB (+GRRB)

- **GNWT:**
 - 2nd year of Bats and Bridges project – almost all bridges in southern NWT have now been checked for bats. Collected bat guano for species ID, disease testing & diet. DNA analysis showed more than 200 species of invertebrates eaten by bats - including 17 species of mosquito and 18 species of caddisfly.
 - Bat boxes – Many bat boxes built in recent years in southern NWT are being used by bats
 - 'Build a Maternity Bat Box Workshop' in Fort Smith
 - Guidance from the Best Management Practices for the Use of Bat Houses (Canada & U.S.)
 - Surveillance for white-nose syndrome – 138 samples from NWT tested in 2023, all negative. The fungus is now present in southern B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.
- **WRRB:** Encourage reporting of bat observations through website and social media. Dead bat found in Whati this past year. Board also considers key bat habitat in regulatory reviews. Supporting bat monitoring projects, including Bats and Bridges.

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Planned to put out ARUs in 2023 but could not due to evacuation – will put out in 2024. WRRB to share photo of a dead bat that was found in Whati.

- **TG:** Not in attendance.
- **GRRB:** Nothing to report for actions in 2023. Should GRRB consider putting out bat boxes? If so, where and how many. Some advice in Bat Management Best Practices. **GNWT:** Don’t want to suck bats into a bad habitat—several should be put up so they can move around depending on conditions. Need sun exposure, not next to a tree, near foraging habitat (wetland, forest edge). This is not about creating new habitat but providing an alternative to roosting in houses. Sometimes people will put metal mesh around to prevent predation (e.g. weasels).
- **SRRB:** No update.
- **WMAC-NWT:** During the community tour in Aklavik there was mention of bat sightings there. There was one in one of the buildings. This will be part of the community reports.

Barren-ground Caribou – All Management Authorities

- **GNWT:**
- Collaborative cumulative effects assessment – modeling how landscape change, industry and management actions affect caribou habitat and population dynamics
 - Expanded to 5 herds (TP, CB, BNW, BNE, Bath)
 - Indigenous Knowledge summaries for all 5 herds
 - Funding secured for 2023-2026
- Wolf monitoring and management
 - Wolf removal program – BNE & Bath winter ranges: 142 wolves in 2023 (includes 44 taken by outfitters in the incentive area); 431 total over 4 years
 - Enhanced wolf harvest incentives – BNE, Bath, & BNW I/BC/06; harvester workshop in Yellowknife
 - Health / age of harvested wolves, Wolf den survey (Bath), monitoring collared wolves (BNE & Bath, possible expansion into ISR), wolf diet report (ISR)
- Monitoring & research highlights:

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- Bluenose-East population survey showed a significant increase since 2021.
 - Estimate: 39,500 (2023), up from 23,200 (2021) and 19,300 (2018)
 - Calf-cow ratios, bull-cow ratios, survival estimates all positive since ~2018
 - Ground-based observers (Kugluktuk and Tlicho) - caribou in very good condition
- Surveys of Beverly (2023) and Qamanirjuaq (2022) – led by GN, awaiting results.
- Research published on caribou health: Hair cortisol as an indicator of stress and insect activity; nematode parasites; mosquito-borne viruses
- **WMAC (NWT):** Community tour to collect information for ACCWM – Inuvik and Tuk. Have also gotten into Paulatuk and Aklavik and will provide to ACCWM. Aklavik normally harvests from Porcupine herd but this past year harvested from BNW as Porcupine was not as accessible. Sample collections are ongoing. Paulatuk is saying they are not required to take samples, Larry to check. People are requesting more research on moose (may be an alternative food, as numbers are on the rise).
- GRRB:** Continue to participate in ACCWM. Working with Yukon groups on monitoring. Met with the range planning group in Inuvik in December and came to a general understanding of a table of contents. Set aside habitat using Marxan analysis. Working with RRCs and people are participating from each of the communities.
- Harvest studies are on the decline. Gwich’in are no longer hunting the BNW herd. Looking to develop an app to set up an easier reporting system. We’ve used gift cards to report on harvesting, but these days there is no real tangible information coming back so we’re looking at something bigger, a draw, maybe sponsorship. Contacted ARI with regard to developing programs for education on all caribou as well as each type of caribou.
- **SRRB:** Ongoing development of community conservation plans and listening sessions. Sahtú communities have been implementing herd-specific management plans for key caribou herds through community conservation planning. This process is supported by the SRRB through the five-part Public Listening Sessions. In 2023, SRRB secured funding for community participation and plan development for the 2024 Norman

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Wells Public Listening (Hearing) Session. SRRB engaged project partners and assisted with the development decision support tool to examine cumulative impacts using both scientific and Indigenous knowledge. Additionally, discussions regarding barren-ground caribou occurred during the Women's Harvest Workshop in Tulita in 2023, indicating efforts to promote awareness and understanding among diverse groups.

- **WRRB:** Boots on the Ground at Point Lake, supporting community harvest monitors on the winter road, participation in ACCWM and BCAC annual status meetings, review of wolf management program annual report, supports continued ground-based harvesting of wolves, participated in meetings to conserve Bathurst caribou habitat under the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan.
- **TG:** Not in attendance.
- **BQCMB:** Management plan to be released in April. New BQCMB biologist Gilly McNaughton was not in attendance but CMA took a quick look at the plan online.

Action 20230221-12: Management Authorities who have not yet submitted implementation actions must be submitted by March 25 for compilation and inclusion in the May meeting binder.

15. Next Meeting – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Overview of upcoming meetings

- **May 22-23, 2024** (Yellowknife)
- September 2024 (virtually) – TBD in May
- December 2024 (virtually) – TBD in May
- February 2025 (virtually) – TBD in May

Currently, CMA meets in Inuvik in February and Yellowknife in May. As February meetings have become more streamlined (shorter), it is proposed that this meeting could take place virtually.

WMAC (NWT) (Larry), **GRRB** (Darren and Robert), **SRRB** (Manisha), **ECCC** (Kelby) and **GNWT** (Joanna) all support the shift to an online February meeting. This may be preferable as there is already an annual polar bear meeting in February, and it makes attendance easier for some

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members (e.g. SRRB). There was a suggestion to consider meeting in other locations besides Inuvik and Yellowknife for the annual May face-to-face meeting.

Decision 20230221-13: Decision to move to one annual face-to-face CMA meeting in May, with the February meeting to be held virtually.

Deadlines for Action Items – At a Glance

March 25:

- SARC memberships
- Annex Bs, Annex As and Statements for Consensus Agreements
- Implementation reporting for 2023

April 15:

- Names for alternate chair
- Rules of conduct (comments/revisions)
- Comments on proposals to shift SCARF funding focus
- Signatures to start on Consensus Agreements

Species at Risk Workplan – At a Glance

The table below outlines the CMA/SARC workplan and includes type of activity and species

Year	Activity	Species
2024	Assessment	Hairy braya (reassessment)
		Red-sided garter snake
	Listing	American White Pelican (assessed Special Concern 2023)
		Dolphin and Union Caribou (reassessed Endangered 2023)
	Management Plan/Recovery Strategy	Peary caribou (adoption of federal recovery strategy by September 30, 2024)

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	Implementation	Northern mountain caribou (management plan)
2025	Assessment	Northern leopard frog (reassessment)
		Western toad (reassessment)
		Canadian Toad
	Management Plan/Recovery Strategy	Dolphin and Union caribou (recovery strategy)
	Implementation	Peary caribou (recovery strategy)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Wood bison
2026	Assessment	Wood bison (reassessment)
		Common Muskrat
		Rock cranberry (lingonberry)
	Management Plan/Recovery Strategy	American White Pelican
	Implementation	Dolphin and Union caribou (recovery strategy)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Northern myotis
		Little brown myotis
		Barren-ground caribou
2027	Assessment	Northern myotis (reassessment)
		Little brown myotis (reassessment)
		Barren-ground caribou (reassessment)
		*SARC will be initiating the RFP process and writing of the barren-ground caribou status report a year in advance (starting in the spring of 2024 rather than in 2025)
	Implementation	American White Pelican (management plan)
2028	Assessment	Muskoxen

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