

## MEETING MINUTES

MAY 22-23, 2024 | 9:00AM-5:00PM  
YELLOWKNIFE – NUNASI BUILDING

Attendees	Organization
Jody Pellissey	CMA Chairperson/Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
Larry Carpenter	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Kendra Tingmiak	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Robert Charlie-Tetlichi	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Darren Campbell	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board
Leon Andrew	Ɂehdzo Got'ıñé Gots'é Nákedí (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
Catarina Owen*	Ɂehdzo Got'ıñé Gots'é Nákedí (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
Stephanie Behrens*	Tłı̨chǫ Government
Brett Elkin	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Heather Sayine-Crawford	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Joanna Wilson	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Bruce Laurich	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Kelby Ogryzlo	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Kathryn Yarchuk	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Katie Rasmussen*	Athabasca Denesųłiné
Jessica Jumbo*	Dehcho First Nation
Lorne Napier*	Northwest Territory Métis Nation
Michele Grabke	Species at Risk Secretariat
Joslyn Oosenbrug	Species at Risk Secretariat

\*Indicates virtual attendance

### 1. Introductions – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

*Roundtable introductions*

#### CMA Participation

The Secretariat reminded management authorities and participants that they can send up to three representatives plus a resource person to CMA meetings. The *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* indicates that Management Authorities may have three representatives attend CMA meetings. As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Management Authority may claim eligible expenses for up to three (3) representatives, plus a resource person, at each meeting of the Conference of Management Authorities. And each participant/observer organization may claim eligible expenses for one (1) representative at each meeting of the Conference of Management Authorities.

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The GNWT indicated that there are participants/observers that were invited to attend CMA meetings several years ago that have not attended meetings in recent years or have not attended CMA meetings at all. The GNWT suggested that the CMA send a letter to approved participants/observers (available in the MOU) restating the invitation to attend CMA meetings.

**Action 20240520-01:** Using the list of approved participants/observers in the Memorandum of Understanding, the Secretariat will prepare letters for distribution by the Chairperson of the CMA with a standing invitation for participants/observers to attend CMA meetings and participate in processes under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*.

### 2. Agenda – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

*Review of draft agenda*

Agenda approved.

### 3. Minutes – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

*Review and approve draft minutes from February 2024*

Minutes approved with a minor change to the alternate chairperson deadline.

**Action 20240522-02:** Secretariat to finalize the February 2024 minutes and post them on the website.

### 4. Review of action and decision items – led by Michele Grabke (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.

### Alternate Chairperson

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 and again by April 15, 2024. No names were submitted.

Decision 20240522-03: The decision to designate an alternate chairperson of the CMA will be brought forward. The Secretariat will put out another call for an alternate chairperson of the CMA.

### 5. General Updates – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

*General updates from Management Authorities and participating organizations. Opportunity for input/discussion on implementation actions.*

Each Management Authority and participant of the CMA was given an opportunity to provide general updates regarding their organization, information related to species at risk and/or to provide input/discuss implementation actions.

Note that implementation summaries were provided to Secretariat except for WMAC (NWT).

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT):

- WMAC (NWT) has three new staff members: Corrine Bullock, Kendra Tingmiak, Jessica Norris.
- During our last meeting we decided that we would put forward a name for SARC membership (Dang-Dang Gruben for a 1-year term as alternate). We have two staff biologists and will likely split the biologists between the CMA and SARC. This decision will be made at the board meeting in early June.
- Funding from ECCC has been carried over for the sensitive habitat paper. This will meet several approaches (1.2, 1.6, 3.5 and 4.8) under the barren-ground caribou recovery strategy. Next steps: update maps, a verification/follow up meetings with HTCs (Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk), and a final review meeting with THTC and IGC before it is complete.

Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board:

- We were struggling with staffing. We are still looking for a fisheries biologist. Engagement with the RRCs has been difficult recently due to issues in the regions. Hard to get information at the community level.
- Dall's sheep were discussed at SARC in terms of where to include them on the assessment schedule. Our biologist Steve Anderson is collecting data on Dall's sheep

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and there have been exploratory discussions on protective areas for Dall's sheep. The work GRRB is doing will hopefully inform the upcoming assessment.

- We are also doing studies on bees and cranberries. The Rat River Working Group (Dolly Varden) is back on track re-establishing itself after Covid. Came to consensus on a conservative harvest to be announced at the end of June. The national management plan for wolverine has been circulated to RRCs for feedback by the end of May.
- **Implementation Discussion:**
  - **GRRB:** The Gwich'in do not harvest northern mountain caribou or boreal caribou so we do not work on these species. We would need to find outside funding to support this work. We are focused on the education side of things for these species instead. We are happy to partner with others, but this will not be a priority for us. This is a rough, inaccessible area.
  - **CMA Chair:** We have never changed implementation actions identified by management authorities. When reporting on implementation actions, you would just need to identify that you are not able to complete this action or are not pursuing work on this action at this time and indicate why not. It is not uncommon to focus on actions that are more attainable.

### Sahtú Renewable Resources Board:

- Currently SRRB is working on hiring a planner and advertising will go out again. We are also looking for an executive director. We are going to use a head-hunter to find a good candidate. We will be advertising soon for a biologist position.
- Main update is the ongoing public listening series – held in February in Norman Wells. Report should be ready by early June. The next listening session is being planned for February in Tulita. Theme still to be approved.
- Fecal sampling in boreal caribou and northern mountain caribou with Micheline Manseau. Taking note on what we are seeing out there. They are a bit scattered everywhere.
- Water levels continue to be super low.

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### Tłı̨chǫ Government

- **Staffing:** Several positions unstaffed in Department of Culture and Lands Protection and we are hiring for a Land Use Planner, Research Intern, Green Energy Coordinator. No change to CMA membership.
- **Boreal caribou:** Range plan being finalized. Next meeting is set for the fall. National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium will be doing a webinar on May 30, 2024. Continuing to operate Tłı̨chǫ Highway Monitoring Program, which collects harvest information along the highway.
- **Barren-ground caribou:** Ekwǫ Harvest Monitoring Program (Feb/March) and Ekwǫ Nàxoède K’è (Boots on the Ground caribou monitoring) are ongoing with a pilot 10-day winter monitoring program at Mackay Lake. This was a huge success. Hopefully fires and water levels don’t impact the program too much. Over 40 Tłı̨chǫ people involved in the caribou monitoring. The wolf harvesting program to facilitate on-the-land knowledge transfer and provide Tłı̨chǫ with opportunities to harvest dìga and support recovery of ekwǫ populations is in its 5<sup>th</sup> and final year. Working GNWT on reporting. GNWT-ECC, WRRB and TG met weekly during the winter for the Barren-ground Technical Working Group. TG also participates in Participation in BCAC, ACCWM, CGC and more recently the BQCMB (TG has been a member for a year) and have formed an Elders advisory committee to help guide work for the Regional Study for the Geological Slave Province where we are starting a two year TK project. Joint Management Proposal for the Bluenose East herd to be submitted in the fall of 2024 and an extension requested for the 2021 Joint Management Proposal for the Bathurst herd.
- Getting ready for the summer monitoring season. Hopefully fires and low water don’t affect programs too much.

### Wek’èezhì Renewable Resources Board:

- Two new staff. A Conservation Biologist (Amanda Weltman) has been hired to fill in for Aimee Guile while she is on leave. The Communications Officer position has been filled by Mary Drake. With this hire we are hoping to return to the communities more, with presentations in the schools in addition to regular communications. No other staffing changes.

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- We were in Gamètì last week for our board meeting. We are waiting for management proposals on Bathurst and Bluenose East caribou that we are expecting a little later this year.
- WRRB will be putting out ARUs outside of Whatì for bats.

### Environment and Climate Change Canada:

- We have more staff in Yellowknife.
- Consultation just closed on three bat species proposed for listing. We are wrapping up those comments and sending to headquarters.
- We are hoping for a proposed listing in early 2025. If that happens, there would be a recovery strategy for 2028. There have been several delays, including questions from the legal department on how consultations were run and whether they met requirements for consultation.
- Dolphin and Union caribou is in the same listing package as barren-ground caribou so if approved in early 2025, the recovery strategy would be required by 2027.

### Government of the Northwest Territories:

- Bruno Croft has retired and will need to be replaced on the CMA.
- A new project has started in the Fort Smith area researching red-sided garter snakes and amphibians, and how they are doing following the wildfires of 2023. This project is being led by Thompson Rivers University.

### Athabasca Denesuline Né Né Land Corporation:

- The Athabasca Denesuline communities are located in northern Saskatchewan but have territories that reach up into the south slave of the NWT.
- Our focus right now is on barren-ground caribou because we don't currently have a lot of capacity for land and wildlife work. We have three herds in the Athabasca Denesuline territory (Bathurst, Beverly and Qamanirjuaq). Right now, we are doing harvest surveys in the area to get a sense of harvest and observations from last users. We also did a pilot study with our sister organization (Ya'thi Nene Lands and Resources) to have guardians out during the caribou harvest. The goal is to extend

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harvest monitoring through Jan-March. We received SCARF funding this year to contribute to this project.

- We are in the process of wrapping up the Caribou Relationship Plan. Should be available in the next few months.

Dehcho First Nation:

- No updates at this time.

Northwest Territory Metis Nation:

- No updates at this time.

### 6. Annual Reports – led by Jody Pelissey (Chairperson)

*Review draft CMA and SARC annual reports. Receive ECC annual report.*

[Review draft 2023-24 CMA Annual Report](#)

Under subsection 16(1) of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, the Conference of Management Authorities (the Conference) must submit an annual report to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change by September 30 each year. This annual report covers the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

The 2023-24 CMA Annual Report was approved with no changes.

[Decision 20240522-04: The 2023-23 CMA Annual Report text was approved. The Secretariat will finalize this document for next steps \(design and submission to the Minister of ECC\).](#)

[Receive draft 2023-24 SARC Annual Report](#)

Under subsection 23(1) of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, the Species at Risk Committee must submit an annual report to the Conference of Management Authorities by July 1 each year. This annual report covers the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

The assessment schedule in the SARC annual report is subject to updates pending the CMA's approval of the schedule. Note that one revision was made since the annual report was initially

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sent to the CMA, it was an edit to the Record of Species Assessments table – Dolphin and Union caribou was listed twice.

If revisions to the assessment schedule are made by the CMA this week, the changes will be transferred to the SARC annual report.

### Receive ECC's 2023/24 *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* Annual Report

Under sections 79(8), 82(3), and 84(8) of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (ECC) must provide an annual report to the CMA by July 1 each year respecting:

- Agreements and orders made under Section 79;
- Exemptions made under Section 82(1)(a) and the reasons provided to the Minister under Section 82(2)(a); and,
- Permits issued under Section 84(1), and of those refused, including the reasons for issuing or refusing to issue a permit.

The CMA received ECC's 2023/24 *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* annual report on May 9, 2024.

### 7. Hairy Braya Reassessment – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

*SARC presentation on hairy braya reassessment outcome. Conservation actions, requests for clarification.*

On May 2, 2024, the assessment of hairy braya was provided to the Management Authorities for their consideration together with the reasons for assessment and the approved status report.

### Presentation – led by Darren Campbell and Kelby Ogryzlo (SARC)

SARC provided a presentation summary of the April 2024 assessment results for hairy braya (Threatened) in the NWT.

SARC met on April 24-26, 2024 and assessed the biological status of hairy braya in the Northwest Territories. The assessment was based on this approved status report. The preparer for the hairy braya report was Jim Harris; Jim also prepared the original 2012 hairy braya status report. The Species at Risk Committee (SARC) determined that there was not

enough available documented Indigenous and Community Knowledge (ICK) to prepare two separate components of the status report. Therefore, there is a single status report and it is based almost exclusively on Scientific Knowledge (SK). Where ICK is available it is included. The assessment process and objective biological criteria used by the Species at Risk Committee are available at: [www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca](http://www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca).

### Assessment: Threatened in the Northwest Territories

*Threatened – The species is likely to become Endangered in the NWT if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction.*

**Reason for the assessment: Hairy braya fits criteria SK(B1) and (B2) and meet conditions (a) and (b) (i, ii, iii, iv, v) for Threatened.**

Status Category	Criterion	
Threatened	SK(B1) The extent of occurrence is <20,000 km <sup>2</sup>	The extent of occurrence for hairy braya is approximately 457 km <sup>2</sup> .
	SK(B2) The area of occupancy is <2,000 km <sup>2</sup>	The area of occupancy is approximately 96 km <sup>2</sup> .
	(a) Number of locations ≤10	The number of locations is 10 with coastal erosion as the most plausible threat.
	(b) Continuing decline, observed, estimated, inferred, or projected, in any of: (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) area of occupancy, (iii) area, extent, or quality of habitat, (iv) number of locations or subpopulations, (v) number of mature individuals.	

#### Main factors:

- Increased range and numbers since the last assessment are due to an expanded search effort and research on its range.
- This species does not exist anywhere else in the world and is found in a very small area of the Northwest Territories that remained unglaciated during the last glacial period.
- Range is limited (extent of occurrence 457 km<sup>2</sup>); index of area of occupancy 96 km<sup>2</sup>.
- There are only 10 known locations, but there may be more on Cape Bathurst Peninsula.

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- Coastal habitat continues to decline (~10 m/year erosion) and this is expected to increase due to climate change. Increasing sea level, storm surges, longer ice-free periods and melting permafrost all contribute to accelerating coastal erosion.
- Hairy braya only exists on Cape Bathurst Peninsula and Baillie Islands in the Northwest Territories, so there is no possibility of rescue from outside populations.
- Hairy braya has specialized habitat requirements and is unlikely to expand its range.
- The species does not compete well with other plant species when establishing or colonizing new areas.

### Additional factors:

- Salinization is affecting coastal habitat, resulting in population decline.
- Increased drought conditions and lightning-caused wildfires are potential threats to the species.

### SARC's Recommendations:

- Canada and the NWT must uphold and, if possible, exceed international climate change agreements including reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the local level. Climate change in the NWT must be addressed by implementing the 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework and Action Plan.
- Encourage continued research in Indigenous, community and scientific knowledge to understand hairy braya and changes to its habitat.
- Check areas of potential habitat on Cape Bathurst Peninsula and Baillie Islands to better describe the distribution and abundance of Hairy Braya.
- Encourage continued implementation of the Tuktoyaktuk Community Conservation Plan.
- Continue to monitor sea level change and rate of shoreline erosion on Cape Bathurst Peninsula and Baillie Islands.
- Continue to raise awareness of hairy braya and threats to its habitat to support recovery actions.

### Questions/Comments/Discussion

The following questions or comments were discussed:

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- **Comment:** The term “extirpated” is used to describe the loss of some element occurrences – however, this term should be used with caution especially in public communications. It is defined in the act for species that no longer exist in the wild in the NWT, but exist in the wild outside of the NWT – which is much different than having element occurrences disappear.
  - The Secretariat will revise the PowerPoint presentation and ensure that communications avoid the use of “extirpation” outside of the definition provided in the act.
- **Question:** Is the density area calculation estimate based on the potential habitat for hairy braya?
  - Yes.
- **Question:** Were the search areas chosen in 2022 based on the potential habitat?
  - Yes.
- **Question:** Can you explain the number of locations and how that was determined?
  - The number of locations for hairy braya is determined by the number of areas where “a single threatening event can rapidly affect all individuals.” For hairy braya, the most serious threat is loss of habitat along coastal shorelines due to erosion. Based on estimated rates of coastal erosion, all occurrences within 1 km of exposed coastal shorelines face possible extirpation within about 100 years. All occurrences in that zone were considered Location 1. Element occurrences within 2 km of these shorelines face extirpation within about 200 years and were grouped as Location 2. One element occurrence within 3 km of these shorelines faces extirpation within about 300 years and constitutes Location 3. The likelihood and timing of potential threats to element occurrences farther than 3 km from the coast are impossible to predict and are far less serious than the erosional threats along coastlines. No single stochastic event can eliminate the remaining element occurrences; therefore, they are considered separate locations (4-10).
  - In summary: Location 1 = element occurrences g, i, l, m, o, q, r; Location 2 = elemental occurrences n and s); Location 3 = elemental occurrence p; Locations 4-10 = element occurrences a, b, c, d, e, f, h
- **Question:** How often are federal recovery strategies updated? And can or how is critical habitat changed or removed?

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- **ECCC response:** There are a few avenues to update recovery strategies. Updates may occur as needed, based on major changes to information or reassessment by COSEWIC.
- **Question:** Regarding the criteria for Threatened, given uncertainty in the number of occurrences and locations, could additional occurrences and/or locations change the assessment?
  - The criteria for SK under (B) refer to the geographic range in the form of either (B1) the extent of occurrence or (B2) the area of occupancy. In addition, two of three conditions must be met regarding:
    - (a) severe fragmentation *or* number of locations,
    - (b) continuing decline in any of: (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) area of occupancy, (iii) area, extent, or quality of habitat, (iv) number of locations or subpopulations, (v) number of mature individuals.
    - (c) Extreme fluctuations in any of: (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) area of occupancy, (iii) number of locations or subpopulations, (iv) number of mature individuals.
  - For hairy braya, the extent of occurrence is  $\sim 457 \text{ km}^2$  which meets the threshold of  $<20,000 \text{ km}^2$  for Threatened under B1, so extent of occurrence would need to be much greater to change the assessment.
  - In addition, the index area of occupancy for hairy braya is  $\sim 96 \text{ km}^2$ , which also meets the threshold for Threatened ( $<2,000 \text{ km}^2$ ). This would also need to be much greater to change the assessment.
  - This criteria selection must also meet two conditions:
    - Condition (a) number of locations  $\leq 10$  is met as the number of hairy braya locations is 10.
    - Condition (b) is met for a continuing decline, observed, estimated, inferred, or projected, in any of: (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) area of occupancy, (iii) area, extent, or quality of habitat, (iv) number of locations or subpopulations, (v) number of mature individuals.
- **Comment:** WMAC (NWT) notes that community conservation plans are due to be updated.



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### Conservation Actions

The CMA may discuss whether **conservation actions** are required immediately (this is an option for the CMA (section 56) as soon as a species is assessed, even prior to listing, in situations where they feel that actions need to be taken immediately). These may include actions to conserve the species, habitat or area; the preparation of a management plan or recovery strategy; and any other matter that the CMA considers necessary or advisable to conserve the species, habitat or area.

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.

Hairy braya is already listed as Threatened, and a recovery strategy has already been published. No further conservation actions were suggested during the meeting that require action through a consensus agreement on conservation action.

### Request Clarification

There is a 60-day period in which the CMA or individual Management Authorities (GNWT and WMAC (NWT) are the only Management Authorities) can request clarification from SARC. If the CMA/Management Authorities would like to submit a request for clarification on this assessment, the request should be submitted to SARC by July 2, 2024. 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. The request and SARC's response will be published on the website.

### Next Steps

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 12, 2024. Recall that the management authorities for hairy braya are WMAC (NWT) and the GNWT. Secretariat to send around the actions to prepare document in Word for editing. Note there is an edit to the actions to prepare document (says red-sided garter snake where it should say hairy braya).

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The **consensus agreement** on re-listing hairy braya as a Threatened species was also drafted by the Secretariat and will be distributed to the Management Authorities.

With these timelines, the **consultation/engagement period** will be from August to November 2024. The Management Authorities confirmed that they would like a consultation/engagement package from the Secretariat including fact sheet, community posters, engagement letters, public survey, FB posts, and paid advertising (print/online and community radio).

**Action 20240522-05:** The Secretariat will distribute the draft actions to prepare document along with the draft Consensus Agreement for a listing decision on hairy braya.

### Timelines

- **May 2, 2024:** SARC provided the assessment of hairy braya to the Management Authorities.
- **July 2, 2024:** Deadline for the CMA to request clarification from SARC regarding the assessment.
- **July 12, 2024:** Management Authorities develop actions needed to prepare for a CMA Consensus Agreement on listing.
- **August-November 2024:** Consultation/engagement period (earlier for GNWT).
- **December 2024:** CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- **January 24, 2025:** 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 2025 CMA meeting.
- **April 10, 2025:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **May 2, 2025:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on adding another 10-year term.
- **May 2025:** CMA meeting – Secretariat to draft press release for adding another 10-year term.
- **August 2, 2025:** Hairy braya re-listed as a Threatened species. Press release.

### 8. Red-sided Garter Snake Assessment – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat) *SARC presentation on the red-sided garter snake assessment outcome. Conservation actions, requests for clarification.*

On May 2, 2024, the assessment of red-sided garter snake was provided to the Management Authorities for their consideration together with the reasons for assessment and the approved status report.

Presentation – led by Darren Campbell and Kelby Ogryzlo (SARC)

SARC provided a presentation summary of the April 2024 assessment results for red-sided garter snake (Special Concern) in the NWT.

SARC met on April 24-26, 2024 and assessed the biological status of red-sided garter snake in the Northwest Territories. The assessment was based on this approved status report. The preparer for the red-sided garter snake report was Claire Singer with an early draft prepared by Kris Kendall.

The Species at Risk Committee (SARC) determined that there was not enough available documented Indigenous and Community Knowledge (ICK) to prepare two separate components of the status report. Therefore, there is a single status report and it is based almost exclusively on Scientific Knowledge (SK). Where ICK is available it is included. The assessment process and objective biological criteria used by the Species at Risk Committee are available at: [www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca](http://www.nwtspeciesatrisk.ca).

#### Assessment: Special Concern in the Northwest Territories

*Special Concern – A species that may become Threatened or Endangered in the NWT because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.*

**Reason for the assessment: Red-sided garter snake fit criterion SK(d) for Special Concern. The species qualifies for Threatened status but there is a clear indication of rescue effect from extra-limital subpopulations.**

Status Category	Criterion

Special Concern	SK(d)	The species qualifies for Threatened status under SK (D2) but there is clear indication of rescue effect from extra-limital subpopulations.
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Main factors:

- Red-sided garter snake qualifies for Threatened under criterion SK(D2) because the index area of occupancy is less than 20 km<sup>2</sup> (the known hibernacula cover 12 km<sup>2</sup> in the NWT) and the number of locations is low (4-6 locations in the NWT) such that it is prone to stochastic events (e.g., drought and wildfires) within a short period of time.
- The red-sided garter snake in the Northwest Territories (NWT) is only known to occur at five hibernacula in the karst landscape around Fort Smith, where they need to spend the winter to survive.
- Their restricted area of occupancy (based on their hibernacula) means the entire NWT population is susceptible to the impacts of drought and wildfire, both of which are increasing in frequency and severity with the uncertainty of a changing climate.
- As the species is at the northernmost extent of its range in North America, a combination of threats and biological characteristics makes this species susceptible to extirpation from the NWT.
- The potential for rescue from nearby populations in northern Alberta is high, therefore the risk of extirpation was reduced from Threatened to Special Concern.

Additional factors:

- Road mortality has been documented in the NWT. This has been identified elsewhere as being a clear cause of population decline. The impact of road mortality on NWT populations is unknown.
- Extreme drought conditions are likely to have an impact on the freshwater wetlands summering range of red-sided garter snakes, primarily by reducing the availability of prey such as amphibians.
- The extent, intensity, and speed of the 2023 fires in the range of red-sided garter snake is a prominent concern. Wildfires affect predation rates in snakes (increasing vulnerability to predation due to decreased cover), can cause direct injury (e.g., burns, overheating,

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asphyxiation) and death, alter vegetation/habitat structure, and cause shifts in forage or shelter site availability.

### Recommendations:

- Considering the extent, severity and intensity of the 2023 wildfires, there is an urgent need to collect information on all aspects of red-sided garter snake biology, habitat and threats. In particular, more Indigenous and community knowledge is needed.
- Research and document Indigenous and community knowledge on red-sided garter snakes, their habitat and threats. This is currently a major knowledge gap.
- Investigate areas of unconfirmed observations of red-sided garter snakes including Nahanni Butte karst areas, White Beach Point (north arm of Great Slave Lake), and near Hay River.
- Promote public education and initiatives to conserve red-sided garter snakes, focusing on reducing impacts from road mortalities, habitat destruction and intentional killing. Encourage public reporting of snake observations and changes to snake habitat.
- Monitor for emerging infectious diseases affecting wild snakes, including Snake fungal disease (SFD) and ranaviruses. These diseases have not been detected in NWT red-sided snakes to date; however, increasing hibernacula temperatures due to climate change could lead to increasing vulnerability of local snake populations.
- Communicate hibernacula locations for use in wildfire management decisions; for example, avoid dropping fire retardant on known hibernacula.
- Create a red-sided garter snake working group, similar to the Pelican Advisory Committee, where interested members of the public and others can meet, collect and share information on red-sided garter snakes.
- Ensure government agencies collect and share information on red-sided garter snakes and their habitat in an open and transparent manner.

### Questions/Comments/Discussion

The following questions or comments were discussed:

- **Question: GNWT** (Heather) asked whether the red-sided garter snake should be considered Data Deficient rather than Special Concern. The report says there are

suspected to be more hibernacula elsewhere, which would increase the area of occupancy. At what point do we just say they are Data Deficient versus Special Concern? If there was more information to determine additional hibernacula, then we would perhaps be able to look at the population-based criteria.

- **Secretariat** (Michele): The Secretariat cannot comment on why SARC did not assess red-sided garter snake as Data Deficient. It was SARC's determination that there was enough information to satisfy assigning a status of Special Concern.
- **SARC** (Darren): Data Deficient was considered but we came back to Special Concern. We had to go with the information we had.
- **GNWT** (Joanna): Best available knowledge may be a more useful way to look at this than the precautionary principle. SARC provides their assessment based on the best available knowledge.
- **Question: GNWT** (Heather) asks about level of threats. Traffic collisions are considered a national threat. In/near the NWT, traffic collisions are determined as “many”—but what does that mean? Is that significant at a population level? Is more than one hibernacula impacted?
  - **GNWT (Joanna)**: Note that Appendix A in the status report includes a table of snake observations including a number of dead snakes due to traffic collisions. More than one hibernacula is impacted by road kill mortalities (see Figures 5 and 7 in the status report along with Table A1 in Appendix A). The roadkill points on the map (Figure 7)—each point represents multiple mortalities. Although SARC did not quantify these recorded mortality observations, it would be possible to do so using the data in Appendix A.
- **Comment/Question: GNWT** (Heather): There is a huge emphasis on the fire, but perhaps this is due to the timing of the assessment. We actually don't have much information on how wildfires impact snakes across Canada. There will not be intense fires every year. Also, snakes have survived previous years of bad fires. This is a normal part of the ecosystem and snakes are resilient. Some have clearly persisted in this area despite the fires.
- **Question: GNWT** (Heather) asked about Parks Canada's data not being available. What do we know about this?
  - **Secretariat** (Michele): One of the preparers (Claire Singer) was not able to obtain Parks Canada data after several requests.

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- **Question: GNWT** (Heather) points out climate change could be considered a positive impact for snakes. Increased survival, increased birth rates could be considered positive impacts of climate change. Also, climate is limited the northern extent so they could potentially expand their range. How was this considered in the assessment? Climate change was mostly considered in terms of impacts of drought.
  - **Secretariat** (Michele): It's not just the criteria, but the definition of the status itself that informs the assessment. SARC also considered the life cycle of snakes – they would have been traveling when the fires came through. In addition, drought is limiting their food source. There are also folks in the area, including Earl Evans, who anticipate predation may increase with the lack of cover.
- **Question: GNWT** (Heather): Need to consider a national scale. Drought and wildfires tend to happen at the same time and will exacerbate each other. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have also experienced these conditions in the past – how have their populations been impacted?
  - **Secretariat** (Michele): We don't have data from our own populations on how snakes are impacted by fires. The status report includes data that was available, however, those situations included different species, and fires that were not as intense as what occurred in the NWT.
- **Comment:** GNWT (Heather): I was worried with the fieldwork we wouldn't see any snakes as well. But there's obviously some resiliency.
- **Question:** NWT MN (Lorne): This area is within our interim land withdrawal. Has there been consultation or engagement with MN in Fort Smith, Fort Resolution?
  - **Secretariat** (Michele): There was a public comment period where the report was available for review (from July to December 2023). Now that the report has been provided to the CMA as a recommendation on listing, the Management Authorities will engage with the public and IGIOS for a listing decision.
  - **NWTMN:** Once we have a settled land claim, we will be responsible for the management of this area. This is good information, but we don't have any Indigenous information here and we need to fill in some of the gaps.
  - **GNWT** (Joanna): There has in the past been a member of the Species at Risk Committee that was appointed based on the recommendation of the NWTMN. Right now that position is vacant and we've asked for a recommendation on a new

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member. Hopefully in the future we will have a member to help get more Indigenous knowledge in the room.

- **NWTMN:** Thanks, we will try and get you a name. In the meantime, I would recommend engagement of the community of Fort Smith and the Fort Smith Métis Council because it is within the interim land withdrawal area. It's important to have someone at the table. There are a lot of Indigenous knowledge holders within our communities, and we would like to make sure you have the best available information.
- **Question: GRRB (Robert):** You mention documented knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is largely not documented. Also, a lot of the long-time Elders are no longer with us so we've lost a lot of knowledge. But still, we need to reach out to the communities to get this knowledge somehow.
- **Question: SRRB (Leon):** Since covid we've been through a rough time. There has been rain in the winter, dry conditions. We need to think this over closely and try and figure out something we can all work with. We need to focus and stay calm and look at what's been put in front of you.
- **Question: WRRB (Jody):** With regard to the questions of 'What is the existing information?' and 'how do we get it so it can be used in these reports?' Each organization is part of the collection of Indigenous and community knowledge.

### Conservation Actions

The CMA may discuss whether **conservation actions** are required immediately (this is an option for the CMA (section 56) as soon as a species is assessed, even prior to listing, in situations where they feel that actions need to be taken immediately). These may include actions to conserve the species, habitat or area; the preparation of a management plan or recovery strategy; and any other matter that the CMA considers necessary or advisable to conserve the species, habitat or area.

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.

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### Request Clarification

There is a 60-day period in which the CMA or individual Management Authorities (GNWT is the only Management Authority) can request clarification from SARC. If the CMA/Management Authorities would like to submit a request for clarification on this assessment, the request should be submitted to SARC by July 2, 2024. 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. The request and SARC's response will be published on the website.

### Next Steps

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 12, 2024. Recall that the management authority for red-sided garter snake is the GNWT.

The consensus agreement listing red-sided garter snake as a species of Special Concern was also drafted by the Secretariat and will be distributed to the Management Authorities.

With these timelines, the **consultation/engagement period** will be from August to November 2024. The Management Authorities confirmed that they would like a consultation/engagement package from the Secretariat including fact sheet, community posters, engagement letters, public survey, FB posts, and paid advertising (print/online and community radio).

**Action 20240522-06:** The Secretariat will distribute the draft actions to prepare document along with the draft Consensus Agreement for a listing decision on red-sided garter snake.

### Timelines

- **May 2, 2024:** SARC provided the assessment of red-sided garter snake to the Management Authorities.

- **July 2, 2024:** Deadline for the CMA to request clarification from SARC regarding the assessment.
- **July 12, 2024:** Management Authorities develop actions needed to prepare for a CMA Consensus Agreement on listing.
- **August-November 2024:** Consultation/engagement period (earlier for GNWT).
- **December 2024:** CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- **January 24, 2025:** 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 2025 CMA meeting.
- **April 10, 2025:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **May 2, 2025:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on listing.
- **May 2025:** CMA meeting – Secretariat to draft press release for listing red-sided garter snake as a species of Special Concern.
- **August 2, 2025:** Red-sided garter snake legally listed as a species of Special Concern. Press release.
- **May 2, 2026:** Consensus Agreement on accepting the management plan.
- **August 2, 2027:** Management plan must be completed.
- **May 2, 2028:** Consensus Agreement on Implementation due.

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

*Update on progress reports/reviews as per the Species at Risk (NWT) Act sections 73 & 74.*

#### [Update on Progress Reports and Reviews](#)

A progress report and review are required every 5 years under section 73 and 74 of the Species at Risk (NWT) Act after an implementation agreement is signed. The implementation agreement for the NWT Wood Bison Recovery Strategy was signed on April 29, 2020. A progress report and review must be completed by April 29, 2025.



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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 reviewed and approved in February 2024. Work is underway to prepare the progress report including plans to brief the three wood bison working groups (Mackenzie, Nahanni and Slave River Lowlands) at their regular meetings, as well as other potential management partners like Parks Canada. Working groups will be offered an opportunity to review and contribute to the progress report as it is being prepared. The first draft (with implementation actions from 2020-2023; not including text on 5-year review) is due to be circulated to the Conference of Management Authorities and other partners in early June.

The Secretariat will monitor the outcomes of the herd-specific management plan reviews that are currently underway at the working group level to help inform the review of the Recovery Strategy for Wood Bison in the NWT. The 5-year review required under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* will be conducted by the CMA (including observers and participants) early in 2024 once results of the management plan reviews are available.

**Action 20240522-07: The Secretariat will distribute the updated workplan for the preparation of the wood bison progress report.**

### 10. Species at Risk Committee – led by Secretariat

*Membership updates and Species Assessment Schedule*

#### Membership

Updates to SARC membership include:

- **Kristi Benson** appointed as regular member by ECC-GNWT, on the advice of the CMA (effective March 29, 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 ECC-GNWT

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Upcoming term end dates include:

- Petter Jacobsen, December 19, 2025 appointed by ECC-GNWT
- Suzanne Carriere, March 31, 2025 appointed by ECC-GNWT
- Nic Larter, March 31, 2025 appointed by ECC-GNWT

Updates from appointing organizations on vacancies:

- **SRRB:** Still working on filling the alternate member vacancy.
- **WMAC-NWT:** WMAC-NWT will be putting two names forward following their meeting in early June.
- **GNWT:** Since the last meeting the Minister filled a position with Kristi Benson. The GNWT has also sent requests to Dehcho First Nation as well as NWT Metis Nation and Akaitcho Territory Government to provide advice on potential members, to help better represent knowledge from these areas of the NWT on SARC.
- **NWTMN (Lorne Napier):** Looking forward to receiving that letter and I will bring it to the NWTMN.

[Action 20240522-08: CMA will continue working to fill SARC vacancies.](#)

2025-2026 Species Assessment Schedule (review/approve)

SARC submitted the proposed 2025-2027 Species Assessment Schedule on May 2, 2024 to the CMA.

[Muskoxen Assessment – Discussion on Appropriate Grouping](#)

In response to the CMA's letter dated May 25, 2023, SARC discussed whether a Muskoxen assessment should be done for the species, or at another appropriate grouping. SARC discussed the need to distinguish between introduced and native Muskox populations. SARC determined that the best option is to assess three distinct populations of Muskoxen in the NWT: Island, Mainland, and Western Transient (which includes introduced Muskox) populations. These distinct populations are subject to different threats and populations trends vary between them.

- **Question:** What is the Western Transient population?
  - There is a transplant of Muskoxen from Alaska into the western NWT. The transient population was an introduced population that is not naturally occurring.
- **Question/Discussion:** Why is there a distinction between island and mainland muskox? The Act enables assessing distinct populations (geographically or biologically distinct). If we are thinking about splitting into populations for assessments, we should be asking whether they are distinct and why. Having different threats and population trends would not normally be a reason for calling them distinct and assessing them separately. The CMA needs further clarification from SARC as to whether or how these populations are geographically or biologically distinct. The option of whether to assess all muskoxen together or to split them for assessment should be left open for how to approach the assessment as the information comes in. How were distinct populations handled in assessments in the past? For example, Wood Bison has three populations; the Nahanni population was introduced. These were not assessed as different populations, neither were the barren-ground caribou herds (with the exception of the Porcupine caribou herd).
  - In their response, the CMA will seek further clarification from SARC as to whether or how these populations of Muskoxen are geographically or biologically distinct.

Action 20240522-09: The CMA will seek further clarification from SARC as to whether or how these populations of Muskoxen fit these definitions. The CMA agrees with adding Muskoxen to the assessment schedule. However, the CMA would like the assessment to be completed at the species level unless the information within the status report indicates that there are distinct (biologically or geographically) populations.

### Assessment Schedule Revisions

- **Question:** Why isn't **Porcupine caribou** being reassessed as well when they will be included in the status report?
  - In their letter, SARC noted that in 2027 barren-ground caribou is scheduled to be reassessed. However, they indicated that the reassessment will exclude

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Porcupine caribou (assessed as Not at Risk in 2017). That said, SARC made the decision to include Porcupine caribou in the development of the status report.

- CMA would like clarification on why SARC will include Porcupine caribou in the status report when they will not be reassessing this herd.
- The CMA agrees with a comprehensive status report on barren-ground caribou by including updated information on Porcupine caribou. However, if the status report is going to include updated information on the Porcupine caribou herd anyway, then it would be beneficial to reassess this herd (albeit separately as was initially done) as well.

Action 20240522-10: The CMA will seek further clarification from SARC regarding Porcupine caribou.

- **Question:** The GRRB has heard concerns from Elders about the disappearance of **songbirds** (not sure which species). Where would songbirds fit into the prioritization schedule?
  - Many songbirds are not within the jurisdiction of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* and would be the responsibility of the federal government. The NWT Species at Risk website and the NWT Species at Risk booklet can be used as a resource for more information.
- **Discussion/Comment:** The Indigenous knowledge of **berries** project is a pretty key input into the assessment of cranberry. The GNWT understands that the results will be more complete if we can postpone the assessment for another year. There is quite a bit of information now but there will be more information when the report is done. Based on this, the GNWT suggests bumping the cranberry assessment to a later year.
  - The CMA decided to move the cranberry assessment from 2026 to 2028.

Decision 20240522-11: The CMA decided to move the cranberry assessment from 2026 to 2028.

- **Question/Discussion:** What new information would go into the 2027 **grizzly bear** assessment?
  - The species was assessed as Special Concern in 2017 but was not listed. WMAC (NWT) noted that there are still many grizzly bears in the Inuvialuit Settlement

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Region (ISR). SRRB has not heard much about grizzly bears as of late. Though they do depend on cranberries.

- 10 years have passed since the initial SARC assessment. However, the Act does not require a reassessment for a species that is not listed. In the absence of significant new information, a reassessment does not seem to be warranted or necessary.
- Section 47 of the Act indicates the circumstances that would cause SARC to reassess the status of a species.
- The CMA decided to remove grizzly bear from the assessment schedule.

[Decision 20240522-12: The CMA decided to remove grizzly bear from the assessment schedule.](#)

- **Question:** Regarding **Dall's sheep**, why is the assessment limited to the Richardson Mountain population and not the species as a whole? Perhaps the status report should break out details on the populations but assess the species as a whole.
  - As per SARC, Dall's Sheep occur in discrete populations including the Mackenzie Mountain population and the Richardson Mountain population. The Mackenzie Mountain population is larger (approximately 14,000-26,000 from a 1998 estimate) and appears to be stable based on horn measurement data from 2002-2017; which indicates relative population stability. The Richardson Mountain population is small and has declined over the last 20 years (from approximately 1,730 in 1997 to approximately 600 in 2022). The Richardson Mountain population is relatively easy to survey on an annual basis. Factors likely contributing to these declines include disease [e.g., pneumonia-lungworm complex and Orf] and reduced recruitment.
  - The CMA decided that an assessment of Dall's sheep at the species level would be preferred. The information within a status report may dictate that there are distinct populations. Once SARC has the available information in a status report, they will be better positioned to determine whether an assessment be broken into distinct populations (either geographically or biologically distinct).

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Decision 20240522-13: The CMA agrees with adding Dall's sheep to the assessment schedule. However, the CMA would like the assessment to be completed at the species level unless the information within the status report indicates that there are distinct (biologically or geographically) populations.

- **Question:** Where does the **prioritization list** come from? For example, Moose is a species that should perhaps be considered for assessment.
  - **Secretariat (Michele):** The species on the prioritization list starts with the NWT general status ranks. Species that are ranked as '*at risk*' or '*may be at risk*' are added to SARC's prioritization. In addition, individuals or organizations can suggest species for consideration. These suggestions may be submitted to the Secretariat with reasons for requesting an assessment. Note that SARC will not prioritize species where there are significant gaps in information or where there are no known threats.
  - The CMA will discuss within their organizations species that should be considered for prioritization. These suggestions will be brought forward at the December meeting.

Action 20240522-14: The CMA will discuss within their organizations species that should be considered for prioritization. These suggestions will be brought forward at the December meeting along with reasons for requesting an assessment of a species.

Action 20240522-15: In the future, the CMA would like more rationale from SARC on why each species is being included on the assessment schedule.

Decision 20240522-16: The CMA approves the assessment schedule with revisions (removal of grizzly bear and moving the cranberry assessment from 2026 to 2028).

### Approved Assessment Schedule:

With these additions, the 2025-2029 assessment schedule is as follows:

- **2025:** Canadian toad, western toad (reassessment) and northern leopard frog (reassessment)



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- **2026:** Wood bison (reassessment) and common muskrat (start RFP process in spring 2024)
- **2027:** Northern myotis (reassessment), little brown myotis (reassessment) and barren-ground caribou, including Porcupine caribou (reassessment) (start bats RFP process in spring 2025 start barren-ground caribou in spring 2024 – one year early)
- **2028:** Muskoxen and rock cranberry (lingonberry)
- **2029:** Dall's sheep

### Status Report Updates

There is currently one status report in progress.

- **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)
  - 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 provided their revised *Guidelines and Instructions for Status Reports* to the CMA. Revisions were required to better align with SARC's revised assessment process and criteria. SARC is also working on communications material and tactics to support calls to action and steer information needs of SARC for assessments of species.

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### Plain Language

SARC recognizes that a complete and accurate species assessment depends on good information. SARC needs the best available information to effectively apply both sets of assessment criteria; however, documented Indigenous and community knowledge on certain species is limited. SARC is working on various strategies for increasing available ICK for species on the assessment schedule—in particular, information needed to apply the ICK criteria.

Short-term tactics include:

- Updated SARC instructions published on SAR website
- Targeted emails (SAR mailing list, distribution lists and contacts such as current researchers)
- Newsletter articles (e.g. South Slave Research Update, Xàgots'eèhk'ò Journal, NSMA membership newsletter)
- Webpage on SAR website specifically for researchers (re: assessments) – *or text could also be part of the SCARF webpage*
- Public service announcements (radio, community posters, Facebook advertising) seeking input from knowledge-holders on species status reports

Members of the CMA have an important role in contributing to this knowledge base. This could include research or information provided directly to the status report preparer. This could also include better representation at the SARC table. As Michele mentioned, there have been efforts to increase gaps in Indigenous and community knowledge holders and researchers on SARC. There is still room for others from different regions who can bring knowledge from their area to the table (e.g. South Slave, Dehcho, Akaitcho). How can the Secretariat support the CMA in making sure more ICK is available for use in status reports and the assessment process?

- **NWTMN (Lorne):** I sent an email to the CMA distribution list with the Traditional Knowledge Policy for the Northwest Territory Métis Nation as an information item. It shows the process and expectations in terms of what we can provide and expect with regard to traditional knowledge.
- **WMAC (NWT) (Larry):** We use working groups for species (DU caribou and polar bear) and community tours to gather input prior to assessments and listing decisions. Once we have information during a meeting, we do a verification at the end to make sure

we got the information correctly. We have also tried to use online surveys in the past, but they have not been that successful and we get almost no return on those. We also do occasional workshops with ECCC and ECC. We include species on the assessment schedule as well.

- **GRRB** (Robert): We let the board and the RRCs know which species are up for assessments. Similar to WMAC (NWT), the team goes out into communities to meet with RRCs and gather input. We will also be going through our research priorities in August, so this may also be an opportunity to flag upcoming assessments and information gaps. We also try to get youth involved and identify employment opportunities for them within their own communities.
- **GNWT** (Heather): We have also been thinking about youth. Perhaps this is a target audience. Demonstrate that there are career opportunities to keep knowledge in the community.
- **GNWT** (Joanna): Perhaps the Secretariat could highlight key knowledge gaps early enough in the process (preparation of a status report) and the CMA can use this information during community meetings. Also, when it comes to the review of the draft status reports – can SARC do a more targeted request to IGIOS on reviewing status reports – specifically ask for a review of that document and highlight the importance of reviewing status reports? Pointing to specific questions or gaps in the report that people could help answer in their review would be helpful too.
- **WMAC (NWT)** (Larry): In the past we have designated a couple of community members to review status reports and they were paid to review them. Staff members of WMAC-NWT would also support this work. It would be useful to include a document that helps guide the review of the status reports and identify or prioritize information gaps.

Action 20240522-17: The Secretariat to send out summary email as a reminder of CMA responsibilities for gathering ICK and proposed approaches for increasing engagement and knowledge-gathering.

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

*Summary of projects funded and subcommittee membership*

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## MEETING MINUTES

MAY 22-23, 2024 | 9:00AM-5:00PM  
YELLOWKNIFE – NUNASI BUILDING

### SCARF Applications/Projects update

Eight applications were received in 2024-25 for the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund (SCARF). **Five applications were approved** for a total of \$60,000.00 in funding. Descriptions of approved projects are provided and will help support the conservation and recovery of collared pika, amphibians and reptiles, and expand monitoring of several other species.

- Community-led Species at Risk Detection: eDNA Sampling in Traditionally Important Water Bodies of the North Slave Region (North Slave Métis Alliance)
- Collared Pika Education and Awareness Project (Ecology North)
- Post-fire Status of Reptiles and Amphibians in the NWT (Karl Larsen, Thompson Rivers University)
- Monitoring and Protection of Athabasca Denesulíné Nuhenéné and Etthén (caribou) using Denesulíné traditional protocols (Athabasca Denesulíné Né Né Land Corporation)
- Northern Whooping Crane Festival (Fort Smith Métis Council)

Most contribution agreements have been signed (one left) and Secretariat will once again check in with SCARF recipients in November and February to see if projects will be completed and funds used. If projects cannot be completed then those funds could perhaps be used for new projects that were not granted funding.

Reporting has been received for almost all 2023-24 projects, including 5-year reporting on the NSMA's eDNA monitoring. This is available to any CMA members that would like to learn more about the results. Project outcomes will be posted to the NWT Species at Risk website in the coming weeks.

### SCARF Subcommittee Member Update

As per the CMA rules of conduct, the regular membership of the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund subcommittee is composed of four representatives designated by the CMA, including one representative from the GNWT Department of Environment and Climate

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Change. A regular member may designate an alternate from their organization where the regular member is unable to take part in a meeting. The term shall be designated by the CMA to a maximum of two years and can be renewed.

In the last few years, CMA has not formally revisited renewals. Term expiries of current members are as follows:

- Aimee Guile (WRRB): October 1, 2023
- Darren Campbell (GRRB): January 24, 2026
- Catarina Owen / Alternate Melanie Harding (SRRB): October 11, 2025
- Brett Elkin (GNWT): Unknown

[Decision 20240522-18: CMA confirms the renewal of Brett Elkin \(GNWT-ECC\) and Aimee Guile \(WRRB\) as members of the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund Subcommittee, with Amanda Weltman as an alternate \(WRRB\), effective May 22, 2024.](#)

### SCARF Proposed Program Revisions

The goal of the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund is to support efforts to conserve, recover, and protect species at risk in the Northwest Territories. The fund is currently being reviewed to determine how to more effectively and explicitly target priorities actions identified in management plans and recovery strategies—in particular, threat abatement/mitigation and important knowledge gaps.

Feedback was received by five management authorities: WRRB, SRRB, GRRB, GNWT and ECCC. Their recommendations and considerations were summarized in a discussion document provided in the meeting binder.

Following discussion, the CMA provided the following direction on the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund:

- **Adjust application scoring to favour priority actions.** This is the most important strategy to achieve the stated funding goals. Applicants should clearly explain how their project will address a priority action and/or identified knowledge gap for the species

and how success will be measured. Points will be assigned to projects more likely to have a measurable impact.

- **Define priority actions.** Knowledge gaps and priority actions identified in NWT recovery strategies/action plans are included in appendices below. Consider providing a consolidated document (with annual CMA approval) as part of the application package, including details of other eligible species/actions under the funding guidelines (e.g. species on the SARC assessment schedule or listed/pre-listed federal species).
- **Do not restrict how funding will be allocated.** There is variation year to year in the number and type of applications received and the regions where the work will take place. The evaluation committee needs to retain discretion to determine the best way to allocate funds in any particular year.
- **Consider expanding the breadth of what SCARF will fund.** Currently funding is not eligible for human resource or equipment costs. To entice universities, researchers and NGOs, we need to be prepared to pay those people for their time by allowing funds for stipend. Capacity-building initiatives can also strengthen the long-term effectiveness of conservation efforts by building Indigenous expertise and empowering communities to take ownership of conservation initiatives. This could include training programs, workshops and/or mentorship opportunities.
  - **CMA Discussion:** What amount of the budget is staying in the NWT? Should be a clear rating criteria.
- **No targeted communications at this time.** Targeting communications at individuals and organizations to carry out priority research or management actions could be problematic and potentially limit applicants.
  - **CMA Discussion:** Encourage management authorities and participants of the CMA to do their own communication – encourage members to apply for SCARF funding when research ideas come up in meetings. We must step up and encourage people to apply.

Other considerations for discussion:

- **Local knowledge and community engagement** can enhance the success of conservation efforts by ensuring initiatives are supported by those who are directly affected. Collaboration and partnerships (with communities and among stakeholders) can help determine the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of conservation actions and should be considered in funding decisions. *Currently, a letter of support is required to demonstrate community involvement/support. Points could also be awarded to projects that demonstrate collaboration.*
  - **NWTMN** has a community engagement and consultation policy for research. We believe that engagement and participation should be happening with researchers in our traditional territory. We have an active Indigenous guardianship program. There should be points for community led and community collaboration, versus researcher who comes with a letter of support. It would be good for researchers to review that document and engage with our communities. Make engagement policies available through SCARF to share with researchers. Gwich'in promoting capacity-building. Research processes require going to the community to talk to the RRC.
  - **CMA Discussion:** There is worry that Universities will end up with most of the funding rather than communities. The criteria need to be structured to benefit communities more than Universities; community run projects should be scored higher.
- **Prioritize projects that support adaptive management.** Impacts of climate change are becoming more pronounced and posing emerging threats for several (if not all) species at risk in the NWT. Projects that support our flexibility to adapt conservation approaches (through monitoring data and feedback loops) can improve resilience to changing environmental conditions and maximize conservation effectiveness over time.  
*Applicants could be asked to include information about how their project helps address or adapt to impacts of climate change.*
  - **CMA Discussion:** Climate change is super important but assigning points based on climate change puts all projects into the climate change box and may affect

ability to fund other projects (put them at a disadvantage). To discuss at subcommittee.

Decision 20240522-19: CMA approved the above changes to the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund and directed the Secretariat to work with the SCARF subcommittee to operationalize the changes for the 2025-26 application period. New application criteria to be provided to CMA for review at their December meeting.

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

*Update on online platforms for NWT Species at Risk*

#### 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 July – September 2024. The next content calendar will be approved in September.

The Secretariat reviewed the social media content and the CMA revised text and photos as per comments during the meeting.

- **GRRB (Robert):** Does AFSAR have funding for TK work?
  - For more information on the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk, please visit the [website](#).
- **TG (Stephanie):** Snakes are also known around White Beach Point on Great Slave Lake or on Waite Island. Waite Island is a forbidden island. Not just because of the snakes but also because it is a bad omen.

Decision 20240522-20: Decision to approve the July – September 2024 social media content calendar with changes.



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### Species at Risk Communications Calendar

Calendar highlighting upcoming dates for species at risk will be provided going forward with the social media content calendar:

- **June 2024:** Draft multi-species status report (amphibians) released for public review.
- **July 29, 2024:** News release issued on the NWT Peary Caribou Recovery Strategy.
- **August-November 2024:** Public engagement campaign for listing decisions (red-sided garter snake and hairy braya) initiated by GNWT/Secretariat.
- **August 1, 2024:** News release regarding listing Dolphin and Union caribou as an Endangered species.
- **August 1, 2024:** News release regarding decision to not list American white pelican.
- **April 29, 2025:** News release and social media on progress report on wood bison recovery 2020-2024.

### NWT Species at Risk Booklet

The 2024 edition of the *Species at Risk in the Northwest Territories* booklet is now available. The booklet is a guide to species in the Northwest Territories that are currently listed, or under consideration for listing, under both the federal and territorial species at risk legislation. For each species, you'll find background information, their status, potential threats in the NWT, range maps, and a did-you-know section filled with interesting and relevant facts. Available online: [Species at Risk in the NWT](#)

Action 20240522-21: GNWT will provide hard copies of the *Species at Risk in the Northwest Territories* booklet by request.

### 13. American White Pelican Listing Decision – led by Michele Grabke (Secretariat)

*Consensus agreement and decision to not list American white pelican. News release.*

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## MEETING MINUTES

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### Consensus Agreement not to list American white pelican

On May 1, 2023, SARC provided the assessment and status report for American white pelican to the CMA and recommended that American white pelican be added to the NWT List of Species at Risk as a species of Special Concern. The Consensus Agreement and decision not to add American white pelican to the Northwest Territories List of Species at Risk was provided to the Minister on May 1, 2024.

The decision and Consensus Agreement were provided to SARC, and will be made available to the public, along with the reasons for inconsistency between this Consensus Agreement and SARC's assessment of the status of the species, as per section 40 of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*.

In short, the colony's one known nesting location is outside the NWT in Alberta – therefore, conservation measures or management planning would only be applicable to the nesting area in Alberta. And there are already measures in place under other jurisdictions that help to manage threats to the Slave River nesting colony.

In addition, although a single threatening event (e.g., disease) has the potential to negatively impact this colony, however the occurrence of disease in the NWT is unknown and there is a high level of uncertainty regarding potential population level impacts. Furthermore, populations of American white pelican have been increasing in the NWT, in Canada and in most of North America.

- **TG (Stephanie):** If Pelicans are being a nuisance (interfering with fishing nets), what can people do about them? What are the rules/regulations around what people can do?
- **GNWT:** GNWT will discuss the rules/regulations with TG directly.

### Timelines

- **May 1, 2024:** Consensus Agreement regarding decision to not list American white pelican provided to the Minister.
- **May 2024:** Secretariat to draft news release regarding the decision not to list, to be approved at May CMA meeting.
- **August 1, 2024:** News release regarding decision to not list American white pelican.

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### 14. Dolphin and Union Caribou Uplisting and Recovery Strategy – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

*Consensus agreement uplisting. News release. Notice of extension for recovery strategy.*

Consensus Agreement uplisting Dolphin and Union Caribou from Special Concern to Endangered

The consensus agreement to list Dolphin and Union caribou in a different category (from Special Concern to Endangered) was submitted to the Minister May 1, 2024. This will be the first species listed as an Endangered species under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*. Dolphin and Union caribou will be legally listed as an Endangered species on the NWT List of Species at Risk on August 1, 2024.

**Action 20240522-22: Annex B of the Consensus Agreement listing Dolphin and Union caribou as an Endangered species will need to be updated to include Tuktoyaktuk and the correct Wildlife Management Division.**

#### News Release

A news release will accompany the legal listing. The Secretariat drafted a news release and will send it to the CMA to review and approve.

#### Dolphin and Union Caribou Recovery Strategy

With a listing of Endangered, a Recovery Strategy is required within one year of listing on May 1, 2025. In February, the CMA discussed the feasibility of this timeline and determined that a notice of extension on the development of the recovery strategy for Dolphin and Union caribou is required. The act has provisions allowing the completion date of a recovery strategy to exceed one year. The completion date and reasons for exceeding the one-year completion date must be made available to the public.

The Secretariat has drafted the notice of extension for the CMA to review and approve at this meeting.

- **Update from ECCC:** A decision from the Governor in Council on the federal uplisting of Dolphin and Union caribou from Special Concern to Endangered in Canada is

anticipated for early 2025. Based on this timeline, the federal recovery strategy deadline would be early 2027.

- **CMA Discussion:** Based on these timelines, an extension on the consensus agreement to May 1, 2027 with a completion date of August 1, 2027 is required.

### Timelines

- **May 1, 2024:** Consensus Agreement on listing in another category provided to the Minister.
- **August 1, 2024:** Dolphin and Union caribou listed as an Endangered species. News release issued.
- **(Current) May 1, 2025:** Consensus Agreement on accepting recovery strategy.
- **(Current) August 1, 2025:** Recovery strategy completion date.
- **(Extension) May 1, 2027:** Consensus Agreement on accepting recovery strategy.
- **(Extension) August 1, 2027:** Recovery strategy completion date.

Action 20240522-23: The CMA agrees that an extension on the recovery strategy for Dolphin and Union caribou by two years is necessary. The Secretariat will redraft the Dolphin and Union caribou recovery strategy notice of extension with these dates.

### 15. Peary Caribou Recovery Strategy – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson) *Consensus agreement accepting/adopting. News release.*

#### Consensus Agreement accepting/adopting the Peary caribou recovery strategy

The consensus agreement accepting/adopting the Peary caribou recovery strategy was submitted to the Minister April 29, 2024. The recovery strategy will be made available to the public on July 29, 2024.

The CMA discussed and finalized the acknowledgements section of the recovery strategy.

- **Question:** When will COSEWIC be reassessing Peary caribou?

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- **ECCC:** COSEWIC will likely look at what dates to reassess Peary caribou when they meet in 2025 or 2026. COSEWIC is reassessing boreal caribou next and they prefer not to do more than one caribou at a time.

## News Release

A news release will accompany the public release of the recovery strategy. The Secretariat has drafted a news release for the CMA to review and approve at this meeting.

- **Comment:** Regarding this news release and the timing of management actions – it would be good to avoid confusion if the 2024 survey results are released at the same time. In 2024, a population survey is planned for Peary caribou on Banks Island. The results from this survey will contribute to management decisions.
  - **GNWT:** The results from the 2024 survey will not likely be available at the same time as the news release. However, the survey can be mentioned in the news release.

[Action 20240522-24: The news release for the completion of the Peary caribou recovery strategy was approved with edits.](#)

## Implementation Agreement

The Secretariat has drafted the consensus agreement respecting the implementation of the Peary caribou recovery strategy. This will be provided to the Management Authorities for completion by April 29, 2025. The actions to prepare document will be due July 12, 2024.

## Timelines

- **April 29, 2024:** Consensus Agreement on Accepting/According the Recovery Strategy provided to the Minister.
- **May 2024:** May meeting - CMA discuss and approves the news release for recovery strategy.
- **July 12, 2024:** Actions to prepare due.
- **July 29, 2024:** Minister of ECC provides the accepted/adopted recovery strategy to the Management Authorities and makes it public. News release.

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- **April 29, 2025:** Consensus Agreement on Implementation due.
- **April 29, 2030:** The progress report and review on actions taken to implement the Peary caribou recovery strategy is due.

## 16. Northern Mountain Caribou – led by Jody Pelissey (Chairperson)

*Consensus agreement for implementation.*

Consensus Agreement regarding implementation of the Northern Mountain caribou management plan

Northern mountain caribou are listed as a species of Special Concern in both the NWT and in Canada. The NWT management plan was released in July 2023 and it is based on the Government of Canada's management plan for northern mountain caribou (2012). The implementation agreement identifies the actions NWT management authorities intend to take to put the management plan into action.

### Timelines

- **April 29, 2024:** Consensus Agreement on Implementation of the Northern Mountain caribou management plan was submitted to the Minister.
- **April 29, 2029:** The progress report and review on actions taken to implement the Northern Mountain caribou management plan is due.

## 17. Next Meeting – led by Jody Pelissey (Chairperson)

*Overview of upcoming meetings*

- September 2024 (virtually) – not required
- December 5, 2024 (virtually) – summary of engagement on decisions, wood bison progress report, recommend species for SARC's prioritization
- February 18 – 19, 2025 (virtually) – implementation actions summary
- May 20-22, 2025 (face to face Inuvik) (half day, full day, half day) – SARC assessments, etc.

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### 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
2025	Assessment	Northern leopard frog (reassessment)
		Western toad (reassessment)
		Canadian Toad
	Listing Decision	Red-sided garter snake
		Hairy braya
	Implementation	Peary caribou (recovery strategy)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Wood bison
2026	Assessment	Wood bison (reassessment)
		Common Muskrat
	Listing Decision	Northern leopard frog (reassessment)
		Western toad (reassessment)
		Canadian Toad
	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

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		advance (starting in the spring of 2024 rather than in 2025)
2028	Management Plan/Recovery Strategy	Dolphin and Union caribou (recovery strategy)
		Red-sided garter snake (management plan)
2028	Assessment	Muskoxen
		Rock cranberry (lingonberry)
	Implementation	Dolphin and Union caribou (recovery strategy)
2029	Assessment	Red-sided garter snake (management plan)
	Progress Reporting and Review	Dall's sheep
		Northern mountain caribou

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