

MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 19, 2025

ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

Attendees	Organization
Jody Pellissey	CMA Chairperson/Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB)
Kendra Tingmiak	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Jessica Norris	Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
Alissa Sallans	Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB)
Leon Andrew	ᑭᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
Catarina Owen	ᑭᑥᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦᑭᑦ (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
Stephanie Behrens	Tłı̨chǫ Government (TG)
Heather Sayine-Crawford	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Bruce Laurich	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Kelby Ogryzlo	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Isabelle Duclos	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Christopher Carli	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Samantha Smuk	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Sarah Wong	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Jessica Jumbo	Dehcho First Nation (DFN)
Michele Grabke	Species at Risk Secretariat
Joslyn Oosenbrug	Species at Risk Secretariat

1. Introductions – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Roundtable introductions

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 December 2024

Minutes approved.

Action 20250219-01: Secretariat to finalize the December 2024 minutes and post them on the [website](#).

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

Designating an Alternate Chairperson

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 and February 17, 2025.

[Action 20250219-02: Continue to bring the vacancy of alternate chairperson of the CMA forward.](#)

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

Call for applications and summary of R&M actions

SCARF 2025-26 Application Period

The 2025-26 application period for the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund opened January 15, 2025, and closes March 1, 2025. A meeting date to review applications is being scheduled for mid- to late-March.

There have been a couple of inquiries from potential new applicants. CMA members should continue to spread the word about research and recovery needs for species at risk in their region.

SCARF 2024-25 Project Applications

All 2024-25 projects appear to be on track to wrap up in April 2025. This includes:

- Monitoring and Protection of Athabasca Denesų́liné Nuhenéné and Etthén (caribou) using Denesų́liné Traditional Protocols (ADNLC)
- Community-led Species at Risk Detection: eDNA Sampling in Traditionally Important Water Bodies of the North Slave Region (NSMA)
- Collared Pika Education and Awareness Project (EN)
- Post-fire Status of Reptiles and Amphibians in the NWT (TRU)
- Northern Whooping Crane Festival (FSMC)

- Youth Engagement for the Future of Species at Risk (SRFN)

SCARF Research and Monitoring Actions Summary Document

A summary document of priority actions/research was developed, and an overview was provided during the December meeting for comment.

The document is a compilation of actions and approaches for NWT species at risk as identified by the Conference of Management Authorities in management plans or recovery strategies that fall under the category of research and monitoring.

The hierarchical structure used was adopted from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) Actions Classification Scheme ([version 2.0](#)). This scheme has 10 level 2 classifications for conservation actions including Research and Monitoring.

In the NWT, there are 10 species management plans/recovery strategies with a total of 367 actions or approaches identified. Across all plans/strategies there are 141 actions/approaches focused on research and monitoring; this makes up the majority (38%) of all actions/approaches.

Within the action classification scheme, research and monitoring is subcategorized into 8.1 Basic Research & Status Monitoring and 8.2 Evaluation, Effectiveness Measures & Learning. Research and Monitoring was further categorized based on actions/approaches identified for NWT species. These subcategories fall under broad themes including biology, habitat, harvest, Indigenous and community knowledge, protocols/methods/models, reporting observations, threats and review.

The Secretariat was tasked with summarizing the document in plain language and posting it to the website as part of the SCARF application package.

For the May meeting can we get a summary of the projects that will be funded by SCARF. A quick blurb with the key deliverables.

Action 20250219-03: At the May CMA meeting the Secretariat will provide a summary of 2025-26 projects funded by SCARF including projected deliverables. As well as a summary of deliverables for 2024-25 projects received.

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

Membership updates and Species Assessment Schedule

Membership

Updates to SARC membership include:

- **Alissa Sallans** appointed as regular member by GRRB (effective January 10, 2025)

Upcoming term end dates include:

- Suzanne Carriere, March 31, 2025 appointed by ECC-GNWT
- Nic Larter, March 31, 2025 appointed by ECC-GNWT
- Petter Jacobsen, December 19, 2025 appointed by ECC-GNWT
- Dang Dang Gruben, May 31, 2025 appointed by WMAC (NWT)

Status Report Updates

There are currently four status reports in progress.

- **In final revision before being provided to SARC for review:**
 - Multispecies Amphibian Status Report for Northern leopard frog, western toad and Canadian toad (2024 assessments)
 - In April 2025 SARC is scheduled to finalize and approve the multispecies amphibian status report and assess western toad, Canadian toad and northern leopard frog. This report completed the legislated [public review period](#) in December.
 - Comments received from the public review period have required that the Secretariat hire a contractor to make revisions, check references, as well as include additional data/information and update maps/figures. Claire Singer has been contracted to help with revisions – she formally worked with ECC-Wildlife and the Species at Risk Secretariat and is very familiar with the guidelines and instructions for status reports along with the assessment criteria.
 - For transparency, this is our schedule:

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- February 1 – work began, Secretariat provided Claire with documents, data and literature
 - February & March – status report drafting/preparation
 - April 1 – submission of draft
 - April 1-14 – review by SARC and other identified reviewers
 - April 14-21 – finalize report
 - April 29-30 – SARC assessment meeting
- If the report cannot be completed before the SARC assessment meeting, then the assessment of these three species will be delayed by one year (and steps will be required under that act including extending the term of listing for [Northern Leopard Frog](#) and [Western Toad](#)) and the document will be required to go out for a public review period. Note that the April 29 to May 2 SARC meeting will proceed whether we have an assessment or not.
- **Other status reports in progress with contractors:**
 - Muskrat – ICK/SK components (scheduled for assessment in 2026)
 - Wood Bison – ICK/SK components (scheduled for assessment in 2026)
 - Barren-ground caribou – ICK/SK components (scheduled for assessment in 2027)
- **Upcoming status reports (procurement process to begin in May/June):**
 - The 2017 multispecies bat status report included 5 species of bat: big brown bat, little brown myotis, northern myotis, long-eared myotis, and long-legged myotis.
 - The big brown bat, long-eared myotis, and long-legged myotis were all assessed as data deficient.
 - Little brown myotis and northern myotis are both assessed and listed as Special Concern (July 11, 2018) and are due for reassessment in 2027 ahead of the listing term end date of July 2028. The assessment and listing were due to threats related to white-nose syndrome.
 - A multispecies bats management plan was developed. It was prepared with the intention of managing for all 8 species of bat that occurs in the NWT – the 2 listed, 3 data deficient and 3 species not included in the 2017 status report/assessment (silver-haired bat, Eastern red bat and hoary bat). All of our bats share several threats in common and there is considerable overlap in their

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management needs – therefore, an NWT-wide multi-species management plan was developed.

- The eastern red bat, hoary bat and silver-haired bat were each assessed as Endangered in Canada and listing decisions are under consideration. Threats to these species are related declines due to collisions with wind turbines along migration routes. White-nose syndrome is probably not a major threat to these migratory bat species.
- The RFP process to hire a contractor to prepare the multispecies bat status report will go out this spring – **which species do we include in the status report?**
 - Just the species to be reassessed (northern myotis and little brown myotis)
 - All 8 bat species (big brown bat, little brown myotis, northern myotis, long-eared myotis, long-legged myotis, eastern red bat, hoary bat and silver-haired)
 - The same 5 bats as the 2017 status report (big brown bat, little brown myotis, northern myotis, long-eared myotis, and long-legged myotis)
 - The listed bats and the three federally listed bats (little brown myotis, northern myotis eastern red bat, hoary bat and silver-haired)
- Other factors/options to consider:
 - If a species is likely to return as data deficient, then it should not be included on the assessment schedule.
 - Species for which there are no known threats in the NWT, or no known threats impacting the species in the NWT, are not considered a priority for assessment and should not be included on the assessment schedule.
 - WNS is not yet in the NWT.
 - There are currently no large-scale wind energy developments in the NWT.
 - How much new information is available?

GNWT: Regarding bats, is there enough new information on the three migratory bats for a status report?

Secretariat: Further discussion will be needed to determine if there is enough information on these bats.

7. Consensus Agreements – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

In principle agreement.

Hairy braya – Summary of engagement results and Annex B

- **WMAC (NWT):** WMAC (NWT) has approved the wording in Annex B and will be ready for signing.
- **GNWT:** Has provided final text on engagement results for Annex B. Need to go through formal GNWT approvals.

Hairy braya re-listing Timelines

- **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 news release for adding another 10-year term and provide to GNWT-ECC Communications for translation.
- **August 2, 2025:** Hairy braya re-listed as a Threatened species. Press release.

Action 20250219-04: Consensus Agreement on listing hairy braya is drafted; start signatures April 10, 2025.

Red-sided garter snake – Summary of engagement results and Annex B

- **GNWT:** We have not made a decision on listing red-sided garter snake yet. But we will be able to make the deadlines.

Action 20250219-05: A decision is still being considered for the listing of red-sided garter snake.

Red-sided garter snake Listing Timelines

- **April 10, 2025:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.

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- **May 2, 2025:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on listing.
- **May 2025:** CMA meeting – Secretariat to draft news release for listing red-sided garter snake as a species of Special Concern and provide to GNWT-ECC Communications for translation.
- **August 2, 2025:** Red-sided garter snake legally listed as a species of Special Concern. Press release.
- **May 2, 2027:** Consensus Agreement on accepting the management plan.
- **August 2, 2027:** Management plan must be completed.
- **May 2, 2028:** Consensus Agreement on Implementation due.

Peary caribou Implementation Agreement

The consensus agreement respecting the implementation of the Peary caribou recovery strategy has been drafted including statements and Annex A.

WMAC (NWT): Council will make a decision on approving the Peary caribou recovery strategy implementation agreement. We are on track to sign the consensus agreement by the deadline.

GNWT: We have received approval to proceed on the Peary caribou Implementation Agreement.

- **February-March 2025:** Secretariat to draft news release for reaching agreement on implementation of the Peary caribou recovery strategy and provide to GNWT-ECC Communications for translation.
- **March 14, 2025:** Provide comments on the draft news release to the Secretariat.
- **April 10, 2025:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **April 29, 2025:** Consensus Agreement on Implementation due. News release.
- **April 29, 2030:** The progress report on actions taken to implement the Peary caribou recovery strategy and 5-year review of the recovery strategy are due.

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Action 20250219-06: Secretariat will send the draft news release via email. CMA to review news release for the implementation of Peary caribou, send comments/revisions back to Secretariat for March 14 and will determine who will be the interview spokesperson/s.

8. 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.

A progress report and review are required every five years under sections 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**.

Wood Bison Recovery Strategy Progress Report and Review

The review of the recovery strategy took place on November 18, 2024. Draft 3 of the progress report (final draft) was provided to the CMA on December 19 (and again on February 7) and to the bison working groups on January 28. Revisions are being addressed and a final draft for approval by Management Authorities (WRRB, TG and GNWT) will be provided by email in early March.

A draft news release was emailed to the CMA on February 7 for approval during the February 19 meeting.

GNWT: Did the working groups send comments in on the Progress Report?

Secretariat: Each of the working groups was provided the draft Progress Report, some of the working groups sent in comments.

Decision 20250219-07: News release for the NWT Wood Bison Progress Report (2020-2024) was approved with changes.

Action 20250219-08: Joslyn to send out revisions on the internal Q & A supplementary document for the Wood Bison Progress Report News Release. Management Authorities to determine who will be the spokesperson for the Wood Bison Progress Report via email.

Action 20250219-09: Secretariat will provide a draft workplan for barren-ground caribou and bats progress reports at the May CMA meeting, for approval.

9. Federal Updates – led by Bruce Laurich (ECCC)

Designating an Alternate Chairperson

Barren-ground caribou and Dolphin and Union caribou listing

ECCC reiterated the message not to wait for any action on barren-ground or Dolphin and Union caribou.

WRRB: Does proroguing parliament add to delays in work?

ECCC: There are a lot of factors, but yes it could add to delays.

GNWT: How does a change in government, say the Conservatives are voted in, does that further delay work (e.g. listing decisions)?

ECCC: Hard to say, but under Harper there were major delays to listing decisions. This listing package was on its way to the Minister, so it's a Ministerial decision. There will be a new Minister, with or without a change of government, which would result in some kind of delay.

10. Funding SAR Work – led by Isabelle Duclos (ECCC)

ECCC invited to present on federal funding opportunities.

Federal Funding Opportunities - Presentation

A presentation on the Species at Risk Funding Programs in the Northern Region was provided (slide deck will be shared). Three presenters with the stewardship unit (Sara Wong, Chris Carli, Isabelle Duclos). Sara manages IPSAR and other projects in NWT. Chris is responsible for HSP and Yukon/Nunavut. Isabelle is acting manager for the coming year.

Our funding programs focus on:

- **SARA-listed species:** Contribute to the recovery of SAR and their habitat
- **COSEWIC-assessed species (EN, TH, SC):** Prevent other species from becoming a conservation concern

Federal SAR Funding:

- **Application Based Funding**
 - Indigenous Partnerships for Species at Risk (IPSAR)
 - Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)
- **Directed funding (Pan-Canadian Approach)**
 - Various initiatives: Priority Species, Priority Places, Indigenous
 - Partnerships
 - No funding commitment past March 2026

Indigenous Partnerships for species at Risk (IPSAR)

- **Objective:** Support the engagement and leadership of Indigenous Peoples in the conservation and recovery of species at risk, their habitats and SARA processes
- **Who can apply:** Indigenous communities and organizations can apply
- **Eligible activities:** Protection of species at risk, capacity-building and collection of IK are eligible activities
- 20% match requirement from non-federal sources
- Multiyear funding is available
- **Deadline to submit application:** Sept/Oct for following fiscal year. Approvals typically by May-August.

GNWT: If you are unsure if funding is available next year, then how do you fund multiyear projects?

ECCC: We can commit to multiyear projects in advance. The availability of directed funding is uncertain after March 2026.

Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)

- **Objectives:**
 - Support habitat projects that benefit species at risk
 - Enable Canadians to become actively involved in stewardship projects for species at risk
 - Improve the scientific, sociological and economic understanding of the role of stewardship as a conservation tool

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- **Who can apply:** Anyone can apply (other levels of government, ENGOs, universities, public, community groups)
- Support applications that propose to address actions found in recovery strategies, action plans, conservations plans or management plans for SARA listed SAR
- 1:1 Match requirement from non-federal sources
- Multi-year (1-5 years)
- **Deadline to submit application:** Sept/Oct for following fiscal year. Approvals typically by May-August.

Application review Process: HSP/IPSAR

- Call for Applications and Expression of Interest (EOI)
 - Calls open – mid-September to October
 - Email notification is sent to all northern partners
 - Regional coordinators advice applicants on EOIs
 - Application submission through online portal
- Review Period
 - Application reviewed using scoring criteria
 - Includes inter-agency review
- Approvals
 - Approvals typically by May-August

Contact our stewardship team to talk about funding for species at risk conservation projects:

Connect with ECCC and submit applications early – also work with online portal system early (it crashes every year).

- Sara Wong (IPSAR) Sara.wong2@ec.gc.ca
- Chris Carli (HSP) Chris.carli@ec.gc.ca
- Isabelle Duclos (Head of G&C unit) Isabelle.Duclos@ec.gc.ca
- G&C Northern Region email: eeptendancenord-sarstewardshipnorthern@ec.gc.ca

GNWT: Can you provide a quick overview of projects that have been funded in the NWT?

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ECCC (Chris): Joanna Wilson did a hairy braya project a couple of years ago. DKFN has a camera trapping project and a lichen restoration project. (HSP)

SRRB: Northern mountain caribou eco-sampling program.

ECCC (Sara): IPSAR projects include SRRB fecal sampling program, DUCA project in Ulukhaktok on health sampling with Susan Kutz's lab. Harvest monitoring program for TG gets IPSAR.

TG: Harvest project gets ECCC funding.

GNWT: For the management authorities on the call, do you apply for both federal and territorial funding?

SRRB: We have funding from both (Federal and SCARF), but for different projects.

WMAC (NWT): We are thinking of applying for SCARF.

Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) – Samantha Smuk

- ECCC has also partnered with CIER to administer funding for increasing participation in the management and the support of species at risk. It is quite wide open. It could be used to help a community gather their own traditional knowledge and write reports.
- **Objective:** Support the involvement of indigenous communities and orgs in the federal SAR process.
- **Who can apply:** Open to indigenous communities and organizations
- Funding until March 2026
- \$5k - \$15k, case-by-case
- Examples:
 - Help pay for travel to workshops or meetings
 - Hold community meetings about SAR recovery goals
 - Contract help with an IQ/IK project relating to SAR
 - Training on how to conduct mapping interviews
- **Contact:** Samantha.Smuk@ec.gc.ca
- Expression of interest is filled out and sent to CIER and Samantha Smuk (will be provided to CMA)

- CIER has funded honoraria and participation expenses on wolverine and grizzly bear recovery work.
- Dolphin and Union caribou work is upcoming, so if support is needed for participation, then this pot of money can help with that.

GRRB (Alissa): are applications accepted on a rolling basis and how long does a response take?

ECCC (Samantha): March and November, but we accept all year long. As for the timeline, we are pretty quick, I don't want to put a number – but perhaps within 4 weeks. We are looking at providing funding before March 2026.

Action 20250219-10: ECCC will share the presentation slide deck on Species at Risk Funding Programs in the Northern Region along with the CIER Expression of Interest form.

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

Updates on the development of the Dolphin and Union caribou recovery strategy.

Dolphin and Union Caribou Recovery Strategy – Background

Dolphin and Union caribou was legally listed as Endangered in the NWT on August 1, 2024. With a listing of Endangered, a recovery strategy is required within one year of listing. A notice of extension on the development of the recovery strategy for Dolphin and Union caribou was issued and made available to the public on the NWT SAR website. The recovery strategy is now due on **August 1, 2027**.

Nationally, Dolphin and Union caribou were assessed by COSEWIC as Endangered in 2017. A federal listing decision is pending. If listed, a federal recovery strategy would be required within one year.

If Dolphin and Union caribou are listed federally, the Government of Canada is responsible for developing the national recovery strategy, together with the government of the NWT and Nunavut. But there are many other partners in the conservation of Dolphin and Union caribou



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that will be engaged in the development of the strategy – including the IGC, the OHTC and the PHTC.

Under NWT legislation, the Conference of Management Authorities is responsible for developing the recovery strategy. The Management Authorities for Dolphin and Union caribou are the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT) and the GNWT.

The first step is for management authorities (WMAC, GNWT and ECCC) to take a close look over the management plan and consider what needs to be updated or changed to develop a recovery strategy. Comments and updates were submitted to the Secretariat in January 2025.

The Conference of Management Authorities has proposed a single strategy for recovery to ensure that everyone is working together in the interest of Dolphin and Union caribou. The recovery strategy must accommodate the needs of multiple partners and be developed using an inclusive and collaborative approach.

The federal government supports a single recovery strategy and coordinated recovery planning. However, they have also told us “Don’t wait for us to begin recovery planning” – and so we may have to get started without them.

The biggest difference between a management plan and a recovery strategy is the federal requirement to identify critical habitat for the species and examples of activities likely to result in its destruction. A federal recovery strategy also requires clearly stated population and distribution objectives for the species. Management authorities will also have to decide whether they will be looking for minor updates to the existing management plan, or possibly an addition, or a major re-write.

Besides these additions, it will be up to management partners to decide what other updates or changes should take place.

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Update on the development of the recovery strategy

Management partners for Dolphin and Union caribou (WMAC-NWT, GNWT, ECCC, GN) met by videoconference on February 5, 2025, to talk about a path forward based on priorities for **scope of work** (update vs. re-write) and **timelines** (work towards 2027 deadline or wait for federal listing). Partners provided comment prior to the meeting on the changes that would be needed to the existing NWT/NU management plan to make it suitable as a recovery strategy and reiterated their support for a collaborative and coordinated approach to recovery planning.

Based on comments received, Secretariat drafted a discussion document with three proposed options for a path forward:

OPTION 1: CMA adopts the management plan as the NWT recovery strategy, with a very short & simple addition that recognizes the background info is out of date and points to the 2023 Progress Report and the SARC Status Report for more recent info. Work to identify critical habitat could begin in the background (would not be led by SAR Secretariat).

OPTION 2: CMA updates the management plan with input from NU and Canada. Additional resources required for critical habitat work (mapping exercises and additional meetings).

OPTION 3: CMA holds off on recovery planning until DU caribou are listed federally and Canada and NU are fully engaged.

Several considerations were also presented to help management partners weigh the options, including:

- The timeline for a federal listing decision is unknown, and with Parliament prorogued, it seems unlikely a decision will be made before the next federal election.
- Without a federal listing, Government of Canada and Government of Nunavut do not have a formal mandate to begin recovery planning for Dolphin and Union caribou.

- Nunavut's participation in the planning process is necessary for a well-rounded, cohesive plan that is supported by communities across the DU caribou range.
- Making major changes to the management plan without Canada/Nunavut fully engaged could result in further changes once all partners become fully involved in revisions.
- Funding availability and capacity for additional community meetings are unknown in the long-term. However, there is some federal funding available through CIER and the Priority Species program that sunsets in March 2026. CWS/ECCC has offered to help seek federal funding opportunities for Nunavut participation and CMA needs, as necessary.

Recommendation to CMA: Partners generally supported the option of adopting the management plan (with addition) as a recovery strategy in the short-term (Option 1) – and then if DU caribou are listed federally and all partners are at the table (and funding is in place), the management plan could collaboratively be opened up and revised (Option 3).

Next steps: WMAC (NWT) is meeting this week in Aklavik and staff committed to seeking direction from the board on the following questions:

- What does the Council think about the option to adopt the management plan (with addition) as a recovery strategy in the short-term (Option 1)? Once (if) DU caribou are listed federally and all partners are at the table (and funding is in place), the management plan could collaboratively be opened up and revised.
- If revisions to the management plan are necessary right now, what role would WMAC (NWT) play in leading this process?
- What role should WMAC (NWT) play in the identification of critical habitat for DU caribou? Does the Council want to lead this process (similar to barren-ground caribou herds)?

Discussion with Management Authorities:

WMAC(NWT): This is on the agenda for this afternoon's WMAC(NWT) board meeting – so an update to the CMA is pending that conversation.

GNWT: We are looking to hear from WMAC (NWT) about what they would like to do going forward and go from there. We are waiting to hear what the WMAC (NWT) board has to say.

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

Social media content calendar

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 2025. The next content calendar will be approved at the May meeting.

Secretariat reviewed the edits submitted with the CMA and provided an updated schedule of posts for approval.

Decision 20250219-11: Decision to approve the April-June 2025 social media content calendar.

13. Summary of Implementation Activities – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Updates on implementation activities from CMA members

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 (2024) implementation actions as a PDF for the May 2025 CMA meeting.

Hairy Braya – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):**
 - Approach 4.2: Work with local Hunters and Trappers Committees and Inuvialuit Game Council to educate about hairy braya and the importance of minimizing human impacts.
 - WMAC (NWT) provided information about SARC's re-assessment of Hairy Braya during the sensitive habitat position paper verification tour in Aklavik, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, and Paulatuk in September 2024, and during WMAC (NWT) community tour in Inuvik, Paulatuk, and Tuktoyaktuk, November 2024. WMAC (NWT) will provide information during the community tour in Aklavik, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok in February 2025.
- **GNWT:**
 - 2024 - GNWT launched a new, online **NWT Climate Change Library**. It houses scientific information, research papers, technical reports and innovative tools from government and beyond in one central location. The platform aims to provide climate research, information and knowledge to those who are working to find solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the NWT. <https://climatelibrary.ecc.gov.nt.ca/>
 - 2024 - GNWT ECC shared the following information with Inuvialuit organizations (WMAC (NWT), IGC, IRC, and THTC):
 - **Poster - Flora of Cape Bathurst and Baillie Island** - This poster is in Sallirmiutun, English and French. It includes a QR code link to a list of the 159 plant species known from the area.

- **List of lichen species** – A list of the lichen and liverwort specimens that were collected and identified from the 2022 survey – including 14 different species.
- 2024 - At a meeting in Tuktoyaktuk, a community member provided WMAC (NWT) staff with **photographs of plants and requested they be identified**. GNWT ECC sent the photos to Paul Sokoloff, an arctic botanist at the Canadian Museum of Nature, who identified the plants as Richardson's bittercress (*Cardamine digitata*) and Crowded wormseed mustard (*Erysimum coarctatum*). This information was provided back to the community member.

Amphibians – GRRB, SRRB, WRRB, GNWT

- **GRRB:**
 - These listed species (northern leopard frog and western toad) do not occur in the Gwich'in Settlement Area and we have no actions to report this year.
 - **Question:** What is the expectation (when the at-risk species in a multispecies management plan/recovery strategy do not occur within a Management Authority's area)?
 - **Response:** There are a few simple actions that can be taken more broadly including increasing awareness and reporting observations of amphibians.
- **SRRB:** Nothing to report.
- **WRRB:**
 - Provided information about reporting NWT amphibians observations in Wek'èezhìi through WRRB's website and social media.
 - Provided information about NWT amphibians and their threats through WRRB's website and social media.
- **GNWT:**

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- GNWT continued working with many partners including Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations and researchers to monitor wildlife using acoustic recording units (ARUs) through the **Northwest Territories Biodiversity Monitoring Program (NTBMP)**. In 2024, ARUs were deployed along the Tłıchq winter road, near Norman Wells, and at Daring Lake. In 2024 ARUs were retrieved from the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road, from near Fort Smith, and from Gamètì. GNWT and a contractor analyzed NTBMP ARU recordings from near Fort Smith and east of the Slave River to **search for recordings of northern leopard frogs**. Recordings were checked from 19 sites and no northern leopard frogs were heard.
- 2024 - GNWT participated in and supported research led by Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in the Fort Smith area: **'Post-fire status of reptiles and amphibians in the NWT.'** Johanna Stewart is working to understand the impacts that the 2023 wildfire season may have had on the red-sided garter snake population in the area; this includes assessing the snakes' prey populations (frogs). Her first field season was 2024 and a second is planned for 2025.
- In 2024-2025, GNWT continued providing **information on amphibians for the upcoming SARC status report** on western toad, northern leopard frog and Canadian toad. This included working with Parks Canada staff to obtain unpublished data on Canadian Toad counts and to make the information available to SARC and TRU researchers. It also included updating amphibian occurrences and maps for the SARC status report.

Boreal Caribou – All Management Authorities

- **WMAC (NWT):**
 - Approach 2.2.5: Periodically review harvest levels and make management recommendations if necessary (e.g., temporary harvest limitations).
 - Approach 4.3.4: Encourage cooperative research, monitoring, and information sharing with all parties.
 - WMAC (NWT) continues to encourage cooperative research, monitoring, and information sharing with parties by attending various meetings including the

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annual Wildlife Act Section 15 and ECC Biologists meeting. We also provide an opportunity for GNWT-ECC and ECCC to propose research activities during its annual review of IFA implementation funded research and monitoring projects. Additionally, we are currently supporting the TK gathering of boreal caribou currently happening within the ISR.

- We also continue to review all harvest levels annually according to the best available information, with harvest in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) which is open to Inuvialuit harvesters and limited to one bull annually for resident harvesters.

- **GRRB:**

- Participated in boreal caribou range planning working groups led by GNWT-ECC. There were 3 meetings last year.
- Joining in on meetings of the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium (NBCKC).
- Supporting boreal caribou habitat research and gather information through RRC meetings and harvest surveys.

- **SRRB:**

- Boreal caribou range planning working groups led by GNWT-ECC.
- Joining in on meetings of the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium (NBCKC).
- Getting information as part of petroleum histories project.
- On the Public listening series – we do not have one scheduled this FY, but one is planned in the upcoming fiscal year.

- **WRRB:**

- Participated in meetings to further the development of the final Wek'èezhì Boreal Caribou Range Plan; applying the interim Range Plan, which addresses best practices for mitigation.
- Reviewed and approved a Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan for a transboundary project in Wek'èezhì/Sahtú. Tłıchų guardian program along the Tłıchų Highway continues.

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MEETING MINUTES

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ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

- Collaboratively developing a Wek'èezhìi Forest Management Plan which will consider boreal caribou habitat supply and use the range plan as a guide.
- **TG:**
 - Range planning – we had a workshop with Elders to verify the range plan map and make adjustments to accommodate to the protected areas within the Wek'èezhìi range. Took that to the working group and we are waiting for a final map to be drafted with the changes that were made. We have to update the TK part of the range plan.
 - Also participate in the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium (NBCKC).
 - Did a webinar back in May – a few ladies from TG. It wasn't focused on Boreal caribou but more the involvement of monitoring and involving youth. Received pretty well – but it was a long webinar.
 - Tłıchq highway monitoring program, collecting observational data along the corridor as well as harvest data.
- **GNWT:**
 - Range planning – inching closer to final plans for Wek'èezhìi and Southern NWT
 - NWT population and habitat indicators for boreal caribou indicate boreal caribou population in the NWT is considered likely self-sustaining.
 - Most recent data (wildfires from 1984-2023; human disturbance from 2020) showed that **68% of habitat remained undisturbed** in the NT1 boreal caribou range (10.1% human disturbance, 24.7 % fire disturbance, and 32.2 % total combined non-overlapping disturbance). Natural disturbances (e.g. fire) account for the majority of the disturbance.
 - Generally speaking, **population trends seem to be stable or increasing in southern NT1 over the last three years**. Average estimated population growth rates (lambda) for the last three years (2020-21 to 2022-23) are as follows: Dehcho North & Mackenzie Valley Highway 1.05; Dehcho South & West Liard 1.00; Mackenzie 1.11; North Slave (TASR) 1.06; Hay River Lowlands 1.07; Pine Point &

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Buffalo Lake 1.06. More details including graphs are provided under the 'Supplementary Info' tab of the implementation update spreadsheet.

- 2024 - ECC and collaborators (Chloe Beaupre et al) initiated a **research project (CIMP247) to examine what factors best predict boreal caribou survival in the NWT**. Preliminary results were presented at the CIMP results workshop in 2025 (presentation available through NWT Discovery Portal). Research questions include:
 - Does the national recovery strategy model used to define the 65% “undisturbed habitat” management threshold do a good job of predicting boreal caribou survival in the NWT?
 - Does human-caused disturbance or wildfire have a greater influence on boreal caribou survival?
 - Are there other ways to measure wildfire and human disturbance that better predict boreal caribou survival?
 - Are there relationships between environmental factors (e.g., snow depth, temperature, precipitation) and caribou survival rates?
 - Are there more relevant thresholds for managing habitat disturbance for boreal caribou in the NWT?
 - Examining ways to estimate boreal caribou population trend at different spatial scales in the NWT (e.g. different study area polygons, entire NT1)

Polar Bears – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):**
 - Attended 2024 management workshop to discuss polar bear management. Involved in Inupiat-Inuvialuit....
 - Approach 4.2.4: Consider the need for research and provide advice on research projects to mitigate impacts to polar bears.
 - Ongoing – Usually Larry. WMAC (NWT) and IGC attended the Nanuit 2024 Management Workshop hosted by ITK in November 2024 to discuss Polar Bear management in Inuit territory throughout. We also continue to be

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involved in the Inupiat-Inuvialuit polar bear meetings as well as the Polar Bear Technical Committee meeting, which had just occurred in Nain. We also continue to gather community knowledge on polar bears during our community tours.

- **GNWT:**

- 2024 - the **results of the Viscount-Melville polar bear survey** were published. The next steps will be co-management boards (WMAC (NWT) and KRWB) evaluating whether any changes in management for the VM subpopulation should be recommended. Also, work continues to **analyze the data from the genetic mark-recapture survey of South and North Beaufort subpopulations**, including development of new population estimates. A working group has been formed to work on the analysis. Available data will be utilized in an Integrated Population Model (IPM) that can incorporate various types of data, including biopsies, harvest, telemetry, traditional knowledge.
- 2024 -After obtaining support from the IGC, GNWT ECC shared tissue samples from the Viscount Melville and Beaufort surveys to **a research project looking at epigenetic aging and whole genome sequencing** in polar bears. Epigenetic aging seems to be promising for non-invasive aging of polar bears, and whole genome sequencing will be used to investigate the adaptive potential of polar bears and reconstruct historic population size.

Dolphin and Union Caribou – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):**

- Approach 4.2.4: Consider the need for research and provide advice on research projects to mitigate impacts to polar bears.
- Ongoing – Usually Larry. WMAC (NWT) and IGC attended the Nanuit 2024 Management Workshop hosted by ITK in November 2024 to discuss Polar Bear management in Inuit territory throughout. We also continue to be involved in the Inupiat-Inuvialuit polar bear meetings as well as the Polar Bear Technical Committee meeting, which had just occurred in Nain. We also

continue to gather community knowledge on polar bears during our community tours.

- **GNWT:**

- 2024 – ECC continues to support **grizzly bear research** projects being developed around **Ulukhaktok** to address community questions about the bears' diet and whether they may be having an impact on Dolphin-Union and Peary caribou in the area. Approximately 25 samples from grizzly bears harvested on Victoria Island were submitted for stable isotope analysis in 2023. The results indicate that their diet was primarily terrestrial plants and animals. The report on this was provided at the June 2024 IGC meeting.
- 2024 - **Andrea Hanke** completed their thesis; they also published this article and shared it with Inuvialuit groups:
 - Hanke et al. 2024 Supporting Inuit food sovereignty through collaborative research of an at-risk caribou herd.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2023.1306521>.
 - The paper draws from Traditional knowledge interviews started in 2018 in Kugluktuk, and connects those abundance and distribution data with other available TK and survey information.
- 2024 - GN finalized and shared the report on the **2023 population survey**:
 - Leclerc *et al.* Abundance estimates for the Dolphin and Union caribou herd (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus x pearyi*) Fall 2023 (available online: <https://www.nwmb.com/en/funding/nunavut-wildlife-research-trust/reports/2023-2/10187-abundance-estimate-for-the-dolphin-and-union-caribou-herd/file>).
 - GNWT and GN renewed a data sharing agreement allowing DU caribou collar data and analyses to be shared with GNWT.

Wood Bison - GNWT, TG, WRRB

- **WRRB:**

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- Attended Mackenzie Bison Working Group meetings to continue implementation of the management plan as well as complete a five-year review of the plan.
- Ongoing habitat monitoring through the implementation of the Tłıchq Highway Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan.
- **TG:**
 - We have been working with GNWT-INF to mitigate bison crossing the Lac La Martre River. In the late spring (back in May) a couple of bison crossed the river and concerned residents of Whatì. We have been discussing how we can mitigate that with the Tłıchq highway committee. Supposed to bring it to the corridor working group. We are trying to identify ways of preventing conflict with bison in the community.
 - Providing comments on the bison progress report.
 - BIG project – What are others' thoughts on what this project is?
 - **GNWT:** BIG project was to present at the Mackenzie Bison Working Group. Will follow up on where that is at? We had planned steps moving forward on that project.
- **GNWT:**
 - In 2024, the TAH of 40 bulls per year for the Mackenzie population was changed from a limited season to an open year-round season. The change was requested by hunters and management partners and is in accordance with the Mackenzie Bison Management Plan.
 - In 2024, population estimates were obtained for wood bison in the Greater Wood Buffalo metapopulation – including Slave River Lowlands surveyed by GNWT and other subpopulations surveyed by Parks Canada. In general, bison numbers in this metapopulation have been decreasing. (Estimates are in the wood bison progress report)
 - GNWT-ECC periodically surveys a [Bison Control Area](#) (BCA). Any reports of bison in the BCA are investigated by ECC and any bison found in the area are removed and tested for disease. In June-July 2024, GNWT-ECC **located and destroyed three adult male bison in the BCA**. The bison were assessed and all three bison were confirmed tuberculosis and brucellosis-free. GNWT-ECC

has initiated a new public awareness campaign about the BCA to encourage the public to report bison seen in the BCA.

Barren-ground Caribou – All Management Authorities

- **WMAC (NWT):**
 - WMAC (NWT) updated maps and held a verification tour in Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk, and Tuktoyaktuk with the HTC and the communities regarding critical or sensitive habitat for the Tuk-Pen and Cape Bathurst herds. Next steps: a final review meeting with THTC and IGC following the February 2025 WMAC-NWT RBM.
 - We also continue to meet with collaborators on barren-ground caribou herds which includes attending the ACCWM annual status meeting in Yellowknife in November and the upcoming Regional Workshop of Barren-ground Caribou Herds in the NWT that will be held in Inuvik, NT, in March. And again, we continue to gather barren ground caribou information during our annual community tours.
- **GRRB:**
 - Participation in ACCWM and PCMB meetings, and provided information on annual harvest.
 - Harvest survey 2x per year. Where harvesters are harvesting is changing year to year.
- **SRRB:**
 - Public Listening Sessions are ongoing
 - Got a call from Colville today about a new draft MOU submitted to GNWT.
- **WRRB:**
 - Supported the 2024 Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è Program at Kòk'èetì (Contwoyto Lake), Deèzàatì (Point Lake), and Ekatì (Lac du Sauvage/Lac de Gras) as well as the ongoing development of the Caribou Guardian Coalition; supported Tłıchų community harvest monitors program on the Tibbitt to Contwoyto winter road.

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ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

- Participated in the annual ACCWM & BCAC status meetings and implemented appropriate management actions for Sahti & Kqk'èetì Ekwò herds in Wek'èezhìi.
- Finalizing an Adaptive Management Framework for management of the Sahti & Kqk'èetì Ekwò herds.
- Participated in meetings to conserve Kqk'èetì Ekwò habitat as part of implementation of the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan; attended meetings for the 5-year Bathurst Caribou Range Plan review.
- **TG:**
 - Continue to run Ekwò harvest monitoring program.
 - First crew is coming back today and the next crew going out tomorrow.
 - Developed respectful harvest communication campaign (radio, social media, posters, etc.).
 - Collaborating on sample collection program with Mary Gamberg and Suzan Kutz.
 - We have a monitor in Wekweèti that is supposed to be monitoring the BNE herd, but they have not been in the vicinity for that to happen.
 - We have three camps now under the Boots on the Ground program (including new Ekati camp that has now extended into the winter). Cabin set up. But it is near a bear den – lots of bear activity. Petter is heading out today for winter monitoring (observation data).
 - The wolf harvesting program joint management proposal expired last year and we are now on our own. The proposal has been approved by the board, so we will start harvesting for wolves soon.
 - Participating in the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee (BCAC), ACCWM, CGC, BQCMB reviewing management plan.
 - Tłıchq highway monitoring program again. Vegetation study has not happened in a while, might be happening this year. Added dust fall collection program. See if dust is affecting the habitat in any way.
 - Technical working group meetings.

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- Completed verification workshop for the geological slave province. Started TK last spring/summer and now verifying all the work that the Elders provided through mapping workshops.
- Just submitted management plan with GNWT on BNE and BA caribou.
- Hosting a caribou conference in the first week of May.
- Community tour to talk about caribou specifically in April.
- **GNWT:**
 - 2024 - GNWT-ECC hired a contractor to conduct a review (literature review and interviews with subject matter experts) on the **impacts of all-season roads on barren-ground caribou**. The objective was to identify mitigation measures applied in the NWT (but also throughout the Arctic) used to avoid and/or minimize direct and indirect impacts of roads on barren-ground caribou, as well as identify mitigation measures that were deemed effective as a best management practice either through mitigation monitoring or by expert opinion, including Indigenous knowledge. A draft best management practices document is almost finalized.
 - ECC and collaborators are developing **spatial data products to support climate-informed landscape planning** for wildlife and habitats in the NWT. These include:
 - predictions of **climate change refugia** across the NWT. Climate change refugia are areas that may be more resistant to impacts of climate change, including fire, drought, and temperature (i.e. areas where temperature increases more slowly). Preliminary fire refugia products can be viewed at <https://ee-cek-nwt-fire-refugia.projects.earthengine.app/view/predicted-fire-refugia-probabilities-across-nwt-and-beyond>
 - **Connectivity models** that consider how the landscape influences wildlife movements. Researchers are working on multispecies connectivity models; we contributed telemetry data from boreal

caribou, barren-ground caribou and wolves. working on getting this work published.

Bats – GNWT, WRRB, TG, SRRB (+GRRB)

- **GRRB:**
 - The first documented observations of a bat was recorded outside of Aklavik! As a result, we will continue putting out ARUs to record/identify bats.
- **SRRB:** Nothing to report.
- **WRRB:**
 - Provided information about reporting bat observations in Wek'èezhì through WRRB website and social media.
 - Key bat habitat is considered by the WRRB in regulatory reviews.
 - WRRB installed 4 autonomous recording units (ARUs) along the Tłıchq Highway to monitor for bats. Tłıchq Government Highway monitors were involved in the installation of the ARUs.
- **TG:**
 - We shared WRRB's post on social media.
 - Received a report of a bat at a cabin along the Tłıchq Highway. The observer was instructed to bring it to the North Slave office for ECC – but I am not sure if he did.
- **GNWT:**
 - 2024 - Researchers published **results from their study on little brown bats in the Fort Smith & Kakisa area in 2011/2012**. The publication was shared with Parks Canada, FSMC, KTFN, SRFN and SLFN.
 - Reimer and Barclay 2024 Seasonal phenology of the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) at 60° N <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.4778>
 - 2024 - GNWT ECC swabbed live bats and submitted the swabs to a **research project that is exploring the use of healthy bacteria on bat's skin (probiotics) to fight white-nose syndrome**.
 - WNS Probiotic Project: <https://wcsbats.ca/probiotic>

- GNWT participates in the national **Bat Maternity Roost Working Group**, to improve the management and protection of maternity sites across Canada. In 2024, this group published a **set of guidelines**: A qualitative approach **for assessing the maternity roost habitats** of *Myotis* species and tri-colored bats for wildlife management purposes. https://www.cwhc-rscsf.ca/bat_health_resources.php#population-monitoring

Northern Mountain Caribou – GNWT, GRRB, SRRB

- **GRRB:**
 - Provided information for a regulatory review for the Gayna Mineral Claims project by Fireweed Metals Corp. to develop best practices.
- **SRRB:**
 - Fecal sampling continues. Leon and the team are going again in May and we are working with the outfitters.
 - Continuing to work on Public Listening Sessions. There are quite a few projects in the mountains right now for mining.
- **GNWT:**
 - 2024 - A program is underway to **monitor collared northern mountain caribou as part of Canadian Zinc's Prairie Creek Mine All Season Road** Phase 1 project and its preparation for Phase 2. GNWT-ECC and Parks Canada are partners helping to support this work. Caribou distribution is being monitored relative to the All-Season Road; collar data will also be used to identify areas of high use and seasonally important habitats (e.g., movement corridors).
 - Canadian Zinc's Annual Wildlife Management and Monitoring Report for 2024 is available online at new.onlinereviewsystem.ca/review/BE2D5FB2-361D-EF11-86D2-000D3AE8C3E0.
 - Ongoing - ECC hosts an annual meeting of organizations responsible for wildlife management in the NWT to promote cooperative and collaborative

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working relationships for effective wildlife management at local, regional and territorial levels. This meeting is required under section 15 of the NWT Wildlife Act. In 2024, the **Wildlife Act Section 15 meeting** was held at the Tree of Peace Friendship Centre in Yellowknife on November 13 and 14, 2024. This year's meeting focused on the past challenges, future opportunities, and current differences surrounding **outfitting** processes in the NWT. Presentations were shared by ECC and ITI, the IGC/WMAC (NWT), GRRB, Tłıchǫ Government, Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated, and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation.

- **GNWT:** what project was SRRB referring to?
 - **SRRB:** It was the Gayna Mineral Claims project by Fireweed Metals Corp proposal.

Action 20250219-12: Secretariat will compile 2024 implementation summaries for the May meeting.

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

Overview of upcoming meetings

- **May 20-22, 2025** (Inuvik) (half day, full day, half day)
- September 16, 2025 (virtually)
- December 4, 2025 (virtually)
- February 2026 (virtually) – TBD in May
- May 2026 (Inuvik) – TBD in May
- *June 15-19, 2026 dates for the North American Caribou Workshop in Yellowknife*