CONFERENCE OF MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 27, 2026

ZOOM TELECONFERENCE

Attendees	Organization
Jody Pellissey	CMA Chairperson/Wek'èezhìı 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	ʔehdzo Got'ı̨nę Gots'ę́ Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
Catarina Owen	ʔehdzo Got'ı̨nę Gots'ę́ Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board)
Joanna Wilson	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Rhona Kindopp	Environment and Climate Change (ECC)
Kelby Ogryzlo	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Orna Phelan	North Slave Métis Alliance
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. Note that agenda item 7 will be covered after item 10.

3. Minutes – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Review and approve draft minutes from last meeting

Minutes from December 5, 2025 approved.

Action 20260227-01: Secretariat to finalize the December 2025 minutes and post them on the website.

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

Designating an Alternate Chairperson

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Alternate Chairperson

Continue to bring the vacancy of alternate chairperson of the CMA forward. The Secretariat emphasized the importance of filling this vacancy.

Action 20260227-02: 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

SCARF 2026-27 Application Period

The 2026-27 application period for the Species Conservation and Recovery Fund opened January 15, 2026, and closes March 1, 2026. A meeting date to review applications is being scheduled for March 25. Two applications have been received to date; the SCARF subcommittee has agreed to extend the deadline to March 15 if there are not five applications received by the end of the day (February 27).

A reminder that CMA members should continue to promote SCARF funding and spread the word about research and recovery needs for species at risk in their region.

SCARF 2025-26 Project Applications

All 2025-26 projects appear to be on track to wrap up in April 2026, and one report has already been received (from TRU). The final reports are due April 30.

Action 20260227-03: The 2026-27 application period for SCARF will be extended to March 15 if not more than five applications are received by the end of day Friday, February 27.

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

Membership updates and Species Assessment Schedule

Membership

Updates to SARC membership include:

- **Petter Jacobsen** was renewed (by ECC-GNWT) for a five-year term effective December 19, 2025

There are no vacancies on SARC.

Upcoming term end dates include:

- Kelby Ogryzlo, March 31, 2026 appointed by ECCC. Kelby will be starting a new position in late March but will flag the SARC term end date to ECCC.
- Leon Andrew, May 30, 2026 appointed by SRRB.

Status Report Updates

There are currently four status reports in progress.

- **In prep for 2026 assessment:**
  - Muskrat – ICK/SK components
  - Wood Bison – ICK/SK components
- **In progress with contractors:**
  - Barren-ground caribou – ICK/SK components; contracted to Blyth and Bathe Inc. and Deborah Cichowski (scheduled for assessment in 2027)
  - Bats – little brown myotis and northern myotis; contracted to Jesika Reimer and Laura Kaupas (scheduled for assessment in 2027)
- **Upcoming status reports (procurement process to begin in May/June 2026):**
  - Muskox – scheduled for assessment in 2028
  - Rock cranberry (lingonberry) – scheduled for assessment in 2028
  - **Questions to keep in mind for these upcoming status reports:**
    - Does the CMA have any suggestions for species experts that may be interested in writing these reports?
    - Does the CMA have any species experts that a contractor should speak to while developing these reports?
    - Does the CMA have information sources or data they would like to flag for the development of these reports?

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

Update on the development of the recovery strategy. Outcomes of the public engagement period. Consensus Agreement on accepting the recovery strategy. Consensus Agreement on Implementing the recovery strategy.

Dolphin and Union caribou were listed as an Endangered species under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* on August 1, 2024, triggering the requirement for a recovery strategy within one year of listing. The CMA discussed the feasibility of this timeline and determined that an extension on the development of the recovery strategy for Dolphin and Union caribou was required. The Act has provisions allowing the completion date of a recovery strategy to exceed one year. The completion date was extended to August 1, 2027, and the reasons for exceeding the one-year completion date were made available to the public.

Management Authorities for Dolphin and Union caribou in the NWT (WMAC-NWT and GNWT) recommended adopting the management plan as the recovery strategy with an addition that points to updated information published since the 2018 management plan. While the completion date for the recovery strategy was extended to August 1, 2027, the CMA is working towards completing the recovery strategy by August 1, 2026, rather than waiting another year.

Dolphin and Union Caribou Recovery Strategy Update

An initial draft of the NWT Addition was circulated to the CMA in July 2025. Comments were accepted until August 29, 2025. A draft for partner engagement (HTOs, HTCs, GN, ECCC) was provided to Management Authorities in September 2025.

Background on the recovery strategy and the draft NWT Addition was presented to the User-to-User working group for Dolphin and Union caribou in November 2025. Management Authorities (WMAC-NWT and GNWT) presented together with the NWT Species at Risk Secretariat. Comments from the working group were addressed and the revised draft was released for public engagement on **December 8**. The engagement was promoted through a mix of paid advertising (newspaper and Facebook) and organic advertising (social media, email distribution, letters to IGIOs, community posters, WMAC-NWT community meetings). The engagement closed on **February 15, 2026**.

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Summary of Engagement Results & status of in principle agreement to accept

WMAC (NWT):

- Our community tour was finished last week or the week before. We were engaging with Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok and Aklavik – but we were weathered out of Ulukhaktok and will have to go back at a later date. The recovery strategy was part of our updates but there have been no comments received so far.
- WMAC (NWT) will work towards submitting Annex B of the Consensus Agreement by March 27 and let the Secretariat know if that date needs to extended.

GNWT:

- Comments from the public review period were summarized from the online survey. Social media comments were reviewed and shared with the WMAC (NWT) staff. There was a good uptake on the engagement, especially on social media. Unfortunately, some of the comments were about the photo used in social media rather than the content of the recovery strategy.
- Two people completed the online survey and there was overall support for the recovery strategy.
- When asked about what could be missing, the potential impacts of the Grays Bay Road and port were brought up as important or in need of highlighting more.
- In terms of information sources, the addition points to the SARC status report for the latest information as well as the COSEWIC addendum that folks in the ISR have been working on. The COSEWIC addendum has been completed but not published yet.
- Commenters also pointed out the recently published book of Elders' Knowledge on Dolphin and Union caribou – one of the outcomes of Indigenous Knowledge research out of the University of Calgary. It is a very cool publication that presents "what was heard" in interviews and it is freely available. It was pointed to as a key piece of information that should be included.
- There were various comments made about changes people have been seeing in caribou populations, environment, predators, hunting practices.
- A commenter noted that the recovery strategy is good, but it needs to be implemented. There was general support with suggestions to beef up or highlight in the addition.

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Consensus Agreement on Accepting

The consensus agreement regarding acceptance of the Dolphin and Union caribou recovery strategy has been drafted and provided to the Management Authorities.

Consensus Agreement on Implementation

As per the Act, a Consensus Agreement on Implementing the Dolphin and Union caribou recovery strategy is due 9 months from the date of the acceptance. The management plan is being adopted as the recovery strategy. An implementation agreement was signed for the management plan. How would the CMA like to proceed with regard to the Consensus Agreement on Implementation of the DUC recovery strategy? Is there a mechanism to point to the original implementation agreement? Are there changes since the implementation agreement, the statements within or the Annex A? Do we just sign a new Consensus Agreement on implementation?

Discussion:

- WMAC (NWT) supports adding text that points to the original implementation agreement in the consensus agreement on accepting the recovery strategy.
- GNWT also supports the option of adding language pointing to the original implementation agreement.

Action 20260227-04: The Secretariat will add text to the Dolphin and Union caribou Consensus Agreement on Accepting the Recovery Strategy that points to the original implementation agreement.

Timelines

- **August 1, 2024:** Dolphin and Union caribou listed as an Endangered species. News release issued.
- **November 2025:** User-to-User working group meeting/presentation on recovery strategy to partners in NWT and NU.
- **December 8, 2025-February 15, 2026:** Public engagement period.
- **March 27, 2026:** Consensus Agreement statements and Annex B table due.

- **April 15, 2026:** Start signatures for Consensus Agreement on accepting/adopting.
- **May 1, 2026:** Consensus Agreement on accepting recovery strategy signed and provided to Minister of ECC.
- **August 1, 2026:** Recovery strategy completed and released to the public.
- **August 1, 2027:** Extension date for recovery strategy.
- **May 1, 2027:** Consensus Agreement on Implementing the Dolphin and Union caribou recovery strategy is due 9 months from the date of the acceptance.

8. Listing Decisions – led by Jody Pellissey (Chairperson)

Approval (in principle) of Consensus Agreements on listing.

Western toad and northern leopard frog – Summary of engagement results and Annex B

- **GNWT:**
  - GNWT provided their final text on engagement results for Annex B for western toad and northern leopard frog.
  - Most of the feedback received was in support of SARC's assessments. The GNWT's current position is to go forward with the proposed listings as per SARC's assessments. We are working on seeking the Minister's approval.
  - The management plan/recovery strategy is already complete. These species were previously listed as Threatened, so the Amphibian Management Plan satisfies the requirement for a recovery strategy. Wording within the management plan indicated that it acted as recovery strategy.

Northern leopard frog re-listing timelines

- **August-November 2025:** Consultation/engagement period (earlier for GNWT).
- **December 2025:** CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- **January 23, 2026:** 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 2026 CMA meeting.

- **April 27, 2026:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **May 27, 2026:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on listing.
- **May 2026:** CMA meeting – Secretariat to draft news release for listing northern leopard frog as an Endangered species.
- **August 27, 2026:** Northern leopard frog legally listed as an Endangered species. News release.

Western toad re-listing timelines

- **August-November 2025:** Consultation/engagement period.
- **December 2025:** CMA meeting to review the results of consultation/engagement.
- **January 23, 2026:** 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 2026 CMA meeting.
- **April 27, 2026:** Start signatures for consensus agreement.
- **May 27, 2026:** Deadline for Consensus Agreement on listing.
- **May 2025:** CMA meeting – Secretariat to draft news release for extending the listing of western toad as a Threatened species.
- **August 27, 2026:** Western toad legally relisted as a Threatened species. News release.

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

Update on progress reports/review and review communication material.

Update on the Barren-ground Caribou Recovery Strategy Progress Report and Review

Work on the barren-ground caribou recovery strategy progress report and review follow the approved workplan. The first and second drafts were circulated to the Conference of Management Authorities and other partners in July and October 2025, respectively, including BCAC, BQCMB, ACCWM, PCMB, KRWB, Government of Yukon and Government of Nunavut.

The 5-year review required under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* was conducted by the CMA (including observers and participants) on November 14, 2026. The review summary was

circulated to participants for verification and was provided to the CMA with the final draft of the progress report in **January 2026**.

Final comments and revisions on Draft 3 were due on February 23. Additional revisions were received from GNWT-ECC. Secretariat is still waiting on updated range maps (GNWT-ECC) and figures (SARC contractor), as well as some information from the GN about harvest allocations. The progress report will be finalized and provided to Management Authorities in mid-March. Public release date is April 9, 2026.

Bats Management Plan Progress Report and Review

Work on the bats management plan progress report and review follow the approved workplan. The first draft (with implementation actions from 2021-2024; not including text on 5-year review) was circulated to the Conference of Management Authorities and other partners in September. A complete draft was provided **February 12, 2026**, which included updated observation maps, complete text, and actions completed in 2025.

The review, which is required under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, was conducted by the CMA on November 21, 2026. The review summary was circulated to participants for verification and was provided to the CMA with the final draft of the progress report in January 2026.

Final comments and revisions should be submitted by **March 2, 2026**.

News Release and Spokespersons for the Progress Reports

Both progress reports will be released to the public on April 9, 2026. A draft news release along with social media posts for the barren-ground caribou and bats progress reports was provided via email on February 18 with a deadline for comments before February 27. These documents are to be discussed and approved during this meeting including decisions on spokespersons. Significant public interest is expected, particularly for barren-ground caribou.

Alissa suggested adding background information on the inclusion of Porcupine caribou. With the additional changes, the Secretariat will send out the revised draft news release. The deadline for comments will be March 4.

Each Management Authority is to provide a spokesperson from your organization for regionally specific inquiries on barren-ground caribou.

Decision 20260227-05: News release for the NWT Barren-ground caribou and bats Progress Report (2020-2024) will be approved via email. The main spokesperson for the barren-ground caribou progress report will be Jody Pellissey; but we will have region/Management Authority specific spokespeople as needed. The spokesperson for the bats progress report will be Joanna Wilson.

Action 20260227-06: Secretariat to send out the internal Q & A supplementary document for the Barren-ground caribou and bats Progress Report News Release.

Update on the Hairy braya Recovery Strategy Progress Report and Review

Work on the second hairy braya recovery strategy progress report and review has begun. A workplan for the progress report has been approved and compilation of actions from 2022-2026 will begin in February. The first draft will be circulated to the CMA once 2025 implementation actions are received. Implementation actions for 2026 will have to be provided early (in July 2026) so they can be incorporated into the progress report.

The CMA's 5-year review required under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* is tentatively planned for May 2026.

10.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 2026. The next content calendar will be approved at the May meeting.

Secretariat reviewed the edits submitted with the CMA and provided an updated social media calendar for approval.

Decision 20260227-07: Decision to approve the April-June 2026 social media content calendar.

Action 20260227-08: The secretariat also provided social media posts for the release of the progress reports. The Secretariat will send these out via email and will be seeking approval by March 4.

11.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. These summaries inform 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 (2025) implementation actions as a PDF for the May 2026 CMA meeting.

Hairy Braya – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):**
  - All work continues to be ongoing. WMAC (NWT) continues to update the six ISR communities during their community tours. No new actions that are being undertaken by WMAC (NWT).
- **GNWT:**
  - Researchers at University of Guelph (Gunasekara 2025) published a study titled In Vitro Morphogenesis in Two Canadian Species of Conservation Concern: Hill's thistle and Hairy braya. Working with plants in a greenhouse, they developed a protocol for in vitro germination, multiplication, and rooting of hairy braya. This study improves our ability to propagate the species to conserve it “ex situ” (out of the wild) if necessary. Thesis:

https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/36bb5dc8-a7ee-4636-ac46-babfbc6bb975/content

- An ECCC biologist who runs the greenhouse at the National Wildlife Research Centre in Ottawa (David Carpenter) is exploring a possible project that would entail working with hairy braya seeds to test germination and flowering/fruiting in a greenhouse environment. Although hairy braya seeds germinate readily, previous attempts to get the plants to flower in a growth chamber have been unsuccessful. (The seeds that he would use are extra duplicate samples that remain at Canadian Museum of Nature after material was deposited at the Kew seed bank.)
- The GNWT is working with a contractor, Suzanne Carrière, to produce a report titled "Endemism in the Northwest Territories" with information on our endemic species. This was initiated because of a May 2023 request from the CMA to identify the current state of knowledge and literature available for rare and endemic plants and lichens in the arctic. The report should help the Species at Risk Committee and the CMA determine whether any of these species should be assessed and whether any of them should be bundled together in a multispecies status report.
- **Question:** Where did those extra seeds come from?
- **Answer:** The Guelph thesis used material collected from Bruce Bennett years ago on one of the first surveys on one of the coastal botany trips. They used material already at the greenhouse. The second project on trials to get the plant to flower in the greenhouse, they will use spare seed packets collected in 2022 during the GNWT survey.

Amphibians – GRRB, SRRB, WRRB, GNWT

- **GNWT:**
  - **Best practices for working in western toad habitat in the NWT** have been published online. This document was produced jointly by GNWT ECC and

Infrastructure and was updated in 2025 prior to making it publicly available. Western toads are found in the Liard Valley, including along the Liard Highway (highway 7) and are vulnerable to human activities—especially during breeding and migration seasons. The best practices provide ways that people can help reduce impacts while working in or near their habitat.

- **Working in Western Toad Habitat: Best Practices**
- **Travailler dans l'habitat du crapaud de l'Ouest : meilleures pratiques**

- GNWT and ECCC staff collaborated with researchers on a study of changing wildfire behaviour in the northern boreal forest. The study examines recent fires in southern NWT as a case study and develops predictions about the implications of novel fire behaviour on wildlife and their habitats, including amphibians (Baltzer et al. 2025).
- GNWT continued participating in and supporting research led by Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in the Fort Smith area: 'Post-fire status of reptiles and amphibians in the NWT.' Johanna Stewart, Nick Boroevich and Karl Larsen are 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). 2025 was the second field season. As part of this field work, we visited the Canadian toad hibernation area in Wood Buffalo National Park in spring, to count the burrow holes toads leave behind when they emerge from hibernation. This is to continue and complement Parks Canada's past monitoring of toads at this site.

- **GRRB:**
  - GRRB shared information on social media on reporting amphibian sightings and contributed to research and land use reviews including amphibians.
- **SRRB:** Nothing to report.
- **WRRB:**

- Shared information on reporting amphibian observations and threats to amphibians.

- **NSMA:**
  - Project for eDNA has only picked up on wood frogs. Nothing for western toads or northern leopard frogs.

Boreal Caribou – All Management Authorities

- **WMAC (NWT):**
  - WMAC (NWT) received an update about the Boreal Woodland Caribou project from Boreal North contractors at the WMAC (NWT) February 2026 RBM. The contract and draft findings are with IGC and findings are to be finalized in March 2026.
  - Boreal caribou working group is planned for some time early 2026.

- **GRRB:**
  - This summer GRRB helped with biodiversity monitoring and put out wildlife cameras and other equipment to learn about habitat, presence and movements. After we put out cameras we saw boreal caribou.
  - GRRB is supporting research projects including NRCAN and boreal range expansions.
  - The twice annual harvest survey is ongoing and gathers information on number harvested annually.
  - We continue to review land use permits.
  - We also have our conservation calendar and work on respectful harvesting.
  - Work with the Gwich'in Tribal Council continues, including sharing information and on boreal caribou management.

- **SRRB:**
  - We have a few projects including deploying ARUs and wildlife cameras.
  - There is ongoing work in partnership with the biodiversity monitoring program and petroleum histories project. We are getting quite a few boreal caribou photos and are very involved in boreal caribou range planning.

- We held an on the land gathering in Délı̨nę in late summer/early fall. There will be another gathering in a couple of weeks on range planning.

- **WRRB:**
  - WRRB participated in meetings to finalize range plan. The interim range plan and mitigation have been applied. WRRB supports the TG guardian program.
  - Working with GNWT and TG to develop a forest management plan on habitat supply and use range plan as a guide. Completion expected summer 2026.
- **TG:**
  - Submitted updates that will be included in the spreadsheets.
- **GNWT:**
  - GNWT continued working on the multi-year project called "Landscape-level Restoration Trial of Seismic Lines in Boreal Caribou Habitat in Southern Northwest Territories."
    - The project's objectives are to:
      - 1) Identify and evaluate seismic lines suitable for restoration within a 10 km buffer around all-season highways in southern NWT.
      - 2) Implement restoration trials of various treatments (e.g., tree planting, mounding, tree bending) in partnership with developers.
      - 3) Deploy wildlife cameras along seismic lines to investigate the response of wolf and ungulate use of seismic lines across a gradient of regeneration status.
      - 4) Actively involve local First Nations and Métis (youth and land-users) in prioritizing seismic lines for restoration, implementing a restoration trial, and deploying/retrieving wildlife cameras in southern NWT.
      - 5) Publish the resulting Boreal Caribou Candidate Restoration Site Inventory geodatabase in the NWT Species and Habitat Viewer.
    - A total of 105 wildlife cameras have been deployed on seismic lines in southern NWT since 2024. Since September 2025, I've been working

with the Forest Management Division and KBM Forestry Consultants Inc. to acquire stereo aerial imagery with co-collected airborne LiDAR of linear features in the surrounding area of Buffalo Junction, as well as complete manual stereo photo interpretation of regeneration characteristics along these linear features.

- We're entering our final year of monitoring for the Tłı̨chǫ All-Season Road. We've collared boreal caribou around the TASR highway since 2017, and as a result we've been able to observe their behaviour to the road, pre, during and post construction phases. GNWT is analyzing boreal caribou road crossing behaviour in relation to the road in the different phases, including crossing frequency, season, etc., with comparisons between the Tlicho Highway and Highway 3. Some results of the barrier behaviour analysis were presented at the January biologists' meeting.
- Ongoing projects that GNWT monitoring data are contributing towards include: boreal caribou survival project, calving site analysis and fidelity
- Boreal caribou collaring deployments and composition survey are planned for Feb/March 2026.
- Range planning next steps are:
  - Spring 2026: Cabinet and WRRB approval for Wek'èezhìı Range Plan
  - Summer 2026: Cabinet approval for South NWT Range Plan
  - On going: Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Sahtu Range Plans
  - Sometime in 2026: seek additional funding from ECCC

- **NSMA:**
  - Our field program got hits on eDNA for boreal caribou, but we have not captured them on our wildlife cameras. We shared information with the GNWT biodiversity team (Liam, Brad and Amelia). The project uses a range of sources including guardianship programs and iNaturalist. The intent is to build species distribution models.
  - Received funding through SCARF and AFSAR – we will be reporting results through these funding sources, but they are available to anyone interested.

Polar Bears – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):**
  - (1.1.1) In 2025, the WMACs and IGC participated in efforts with researchers and Alaska partners to map available IK of polar bears, including information documented in Inuvialuit and Nanuq, onto an integrated population model (IPM) for Southern Beaufort Sea polar bears. This work was informed by the knowledge and priorities documented in Inuvialuit and Nanuq.
  - (1.1.2) An Indigenous Knowledge Database was used for the 2019-2023 SB survey design; a statistical analysis was initiated in 2025, and initial results are expected in 2026.
  - (1.1.3) The results of the IK informed IPM mentioned in 1.1.1, which was under development in 2025, will be presented to the WMACs and IGC at quarterly meetings.
  - (1.1.4) The project mentioned in 1.1.1 will result in an updated understanding of best practices for applied documentation of polar bear IK, targeted toward co-management recommendations. This work was ongoing in 2025.
  - (1.3.1) In 2025, the technical advisors to the I-I Joint Commission, which includes the WMACs, IGC, ECC, YDoE, and ECCC on the Canada side, worked on a 5-10-year research plan for Southern Beaufort Sea polar bears. The research plan will be presented to the I-I in 2026 or a subsequent year. The research plan will identify inventory methods and recommended schedule.
  - (1.3.2) In 2025, the WMACs and IGC, along with the technical advisors to the I-I Joint Commission, planned for a series of genetics workshops. These workshops, to be held in 2026 in conjunction with the PBTC and the I-I Joint Commission, will explore genetic-based approaches (alternate methods) to monitoring polar bear populations and assessing subpopulation size.
  - (1.3.3) Viscount Melville abundance estimate results have been published in a peer-reviewed publication. In 2025, they were presented to the PBTC and to the I-I West Kitikmeot Joint Commission.

- (1.3.5) In 2025, the PBSG worked on updating their understanding of subpopulation delineation. Also in 2025, the PBAC requested that the PBTC provide them with updated technical advice on subpopulation delineation.
- (2.1.1) The I-I Joint Commission on Polar Bear meeting was held in July 2025 in Utqiagvik, Alaska, of which IGC, the WMACs, and co-management groups were in attendance. Also, the I-I West Kitikmeot Joint Commission on Polar Bear was held in November 2025 in Yellowknife, NT. IGC, WMAC (NWT), KRWB, and co-management groups were in attendance.
- (2.2.1) In the summer of 2025, WMAC (NS) started a bi-weekly radio show to share relevant information on various wildlife topics, research updates, etc.
- (2.2.1 & 5.2.2) IGC and the WMACs contracted Alexandra Langwieder to create polar bear infographics highlighting South Beaufort and North Beaufort populations, TK gathering, and the integration into the population model. Two infographics were completed in 2025.
- (2.3.2) PBTC met in Nain in February 2025 and PBAC met in Gatineau in May 2025.
- (2.3.3) 2025 was the last year of the 2015-2025 Circumpolar Action Plan (CAP). Canada presented on options for a future CAP during a 2025 PBAC meeting. WMAC (NS) shared feedback on the future planning of the CAP. Larry Carpenter (WMAC NWT) and Jennifer Smith (WMAC NS) participated in the delegation for the January 2026 Range States Meeting. Delegation preparations were held in 2025, including input on CAP.
- (4.2.1) GNWT-ECC, with the support of the WMACs and IGC, presented information on bears handled in the ISR and documented impacts, at the 2025 PBTC meeting in Nain.
- (4.2.5) At the 2025 PBTC meeting, the committee discussed the Viscount Melville abundance estimate results. Eric Regehr, the statistician, shared how the addition of telemetry data added confidence to the results, corrected for bias in the estimate, and narrowed the confidence intervals. No formal power analysis was undertaken, though.
- (4.3.8) In 2025, US Fish and Wildlife Service conducted an experiment to detect polar bear response to tourism-based boat activity in the western part of the Southern Beaufort subpopulation. Results will be written up in 2026,

and we expect to be able to consider these results in ISR shipping and boat disturbance conversations.
    - (5.2.4) During the 2026 Range States meeting, WMAC (NS) presented information on TK and on polar bear management.

- **GNWT:**
    - GNWT ECC regional staff undertook a community tour, visiting all the ISR communities to discuss issues related to wildlife management (tour to be completed in early 2026). Polar bear topics discussed included harvest (numbers, sex ratios, locations, quotas, etc), the Beaufort Sea population survey and analysis of results, the Viscount Melville population survey and that population's harvest management, and additional information on genetics and age obtained from studies, surveys and harvested bears.
    - Update on 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 of survey results. Available data will be utilized in an Integrated Population Model (IPM) that can incorporate various types of data, including biopsies, harvest, telemetry, traditional knowledge, etc. The working group is currently meeting monthly. Organizational uncertainty with US collaborators and reduction in available funding has led to a scaling back of the planned analysis at this stage with developing/testing the model to focus particularly on the Southern Beaufort subpopulation. The anticipation is that a second phase of the analysis will look at developing coordinated abundance estimates for Southern and Northern Beaufort subpopulations, likely in 2026/2027 fiscal year pending receipt of appropriate funding.

Dolphin and Union Caribou – WMAC (NWT) and GNWT

- **WMAC (NWT):**
    - (1.1.2 & 1.1.7 & 1.1.8) IGC, WMAC (NWT), and KRWB meet regularly to discuss DU caribou. In November 2025, co-management partners met and held the User-to-User DU Meeting in Yellowknife, NT. An intersessional meeting is scheduled for June 2026.

- (2.1.6) WMAC (NWT) and co-management boards in the ISR work closely with researchers and community monitoring programs in the region. Additionally, the Imaryuk monitors continue to do the annual monitoring along the ITH and reports back to the IHTC, THTC and IGC.
- (3.4.2) IGC continues to coordinate research activity with the government and different research institutes and organizations including the HTCs. Caribou research is a high priority for IGC. IGC has several MOUs with research institutes and agreements with the government.
- (5.1.1) IGC has discussed the importance of restarting the Inuvialuit Harvest Study and the need for baseline data.
- (5.2.3) IGC met with Brian Wade (IRC-ICEDO) and discussed the importance of restarting the Inuvialuit Harvest Study as well as making sure that ICEDO's call out to harvesters for species does not deplete an area's resources.

- **GNWT:**
  - CMA is working towards adopting the existing joint management plan to fulfil the requirement for an NWT recovery strategy. As part of this, GNWT conducted public engagement on the recovery strategy and staff attended the NWT-Nunavut Dolphin and Union Caribou User-to-User group meeting in November 2025. GNWT ECC regional staff also undertook a community tour, visiting all the ISR communities to discuss issues related to wildlife management including Dolphin and Union caribou (tour to be completed in early 2026).
  - On August 28, 2025, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Government of Nunavut signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on caribou cooperation between the two territories. This MOU shows a commitment to work collaboratively to manage shared populations of caribou herds. https://www.gov.nt.ca/en/newsroom/protecting-caribou-together-nwt-and-nunavut-sign-updated-mou . The new MOU includes updates to monitoring schedules for shared caribou herds, and an agreement to share data and information collected during monitoring activities and projects relating to caribou. Peary caribou and Dolphin and Union caribou were added to the agreement.

- The following thesis was published: HE Atkinson - 2025 Mapping the risks of sea ice change, shipping, and Peary and Dolphin-Union caribou movements to Inuvialuit and Inuit well-being in the Western Arctic. Thesis https://ualberta.scholaris.ca/items/572c924b-2612-49ae-85f2-7f4a1f63a546 GNWT staff (and many others) assisted with planning and data sourcing for this project.

Wood Bison - GNWT, TG, WRRB

- **WRRB:**
  - WRRB approved an increase in wood bison total allowable harvest in 2025.
  - Our staff work with the Mackenzie bison working group. Through this working group we did a 5-year review of the plan.
  - Also worked on habitat monitoring through the implementation of the TG wildlife and monitoring plan.
- **GNWT:**
  - GNWT provided information for the upcoming SARC status report and re-assessment of wood bison, as well as for the now published Progress Report on the Recovery of Wood Bison in the Northwest Territories (2020-2024).
  - A population survey of the Nahanni wood bison was completed in March 2025. In 2021 the Nahanni population was estimated at 544 bison (95% CI: 371-717), which was down from the 2017 estimate of 962 bison (95% CI: 595-1329).
  - GNWT was planning to conduct a survey in February 2026 to develop a population estimate for bison in the Slave River Lowlands, a population has been in decline since 2009. This would be a repeat of a 2024 survey and would be done to coincide with the Wood Buffalo National Park survey. Plans may be changing; an update from the field is needed to confirm.
  - Two wood bison bulls were detected in the Bison Control Area in July 2025 and were dispatched. New highway signs informing people about the BCA were installed. Some reports on past years of the Bison Control Area program were published:

- Bison Control Area Program Annual Report 2013/2014 - 2015/2016 (Manuscript Report)
- Bison Control Area Program Annual Report 2016/2017 - 2019/2020 (manuscript report)
- Bison Control Area Program Annual Report 2020/2021 (manuscript report)
- Bison Control Area Program Annual Report 2021/2022 (manuscript report)
- Bison Control Area Program Annual Report 2022/2023 (manuscript report)

- ECC planned to deploy collars on female bison in all three NWT bison populations in February 2025. Seven collars were deployed as planned on Nahanni bison, and 10 of 15 were deployed on Slave River Lowlands/Wood Buffalo National Park cows. Due to aircraft and weather problems, we did not capture any bison in the Mackenzie population.
- A suspected anthrax case along Highway 3 in the summer of 2025 between Behchoko and Fort Providence came back as a confirmed negative. The carcass was treated with incineration and chemical decontamination out an abundance of caution while awaiting confirmed laboratory results.

Barren-ground Caribou – All Management Authorities

- **WMAC (NWT)**:
  - (1.2) The Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula/Cape Bathurst Sensitive Habitat Position Paper was completed and has been distributed with all co-management partners.
  - (1.6) Funding sources have been identified within territorial and federal government departments (i.e., SCARF, ASCF) to pursue a proposal to host an annual workshop focused on Objective 5 (see 3.2, 3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4) (not quite sure of the dates for this yet. But it has been identified for the 2026 year.

- With multiple workshops and meetings that WMAC (NWT) has been either hosting or co-hosting, this workshop proposal has been placed on hold until the September 2026 meeting.
- (2.4) WMAC (NWT) invited the CIMP/POLAR project "CEA of BGC" with GNWT-ECC's (Mélanie Routh, Thom Stubbs, John Nishi, and Matt Carlson) and ALCES flow to the WMAC (NWT) November RBM following the October workshop in Yellowknife, NWT. The Council provided a letter of recommendations for the project's development.
- The Inuvialuit CCPs are due for their 8-year review. The Joint Secretariat will be putting a call out for a contractor following the WMAC (NWT) February RBM.

- **GRRB**:
  - We are involved in ACCWM.
  - Work included interviewing harvesters and getting feedback on action plans.
  - There were two cumulative effects workshops on population effects modeling.
  - The harvest survey is done twice per year. This helps us learn about observations on the land, what is changing with the weather or other wildlife/plants.
  - We continue to review land use permits including reducing impacts to caribou and their habitats.
  - Looking at impacts of proposed Mackenzie valley highway particularly for BNE and BNW. Wolves and too many predators on caribou.

- **SRRB**:
  - Participate in ACCWM.
  - We are supporting Colville Lake in their update of the community conservation plan - it should be coming back to us soon.
- **WRRB**:
  - Supported Boots on the Ground program and the Caribou Guardians Coalition.
  - Attended and provided funding for the Ekwo gathering.

- Participated in ACCWM BCAC status meeting. Undertaking evaluation of Taking Care of Caribou MP.
- Immigration, habitat access and conservation.

- **GNWT**:
  - Bathurst Caribou Advisory Council (BCAC - includes WRRB, TG, NSMA, NWTMN, ADNLC and GNWT-ECC) is finalizing a 5-year review of the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan and a progress report on the implementation of the range plan.
  - Graduate students from the University of Saskatchewan (Taylor Volappi and Dr. Emily Jenkins) and the University of Kansas (Danielle Land and Riley Green from the Colella lab) processed wolf intestines collected during the Joint TG-GNWT Wolf (Dìga) Management Program to investigate wolf health and predator-prey relationships. GNWT-ECC also works with the University of Saskatchewan (Dr. Tim Jardine) and University of Calgary (Dr. Benjamin Barst) on broad scale diet analysis using samples collected from harvested wolves.
  - Successful in getting an NSERC Grant for three-year collaborative project
    - Holistic study of wolf ecology and health
    - UNBC, USASK and U Kansas, WRRB, Industry, GNWT, GN, Tłı̨chǫ Government
    - Link wolf diet, parasites and genetics to support adaptive co-management
  - 2024-Ongoing – In March 2024, a wolf collaring program was initiated on the mainland of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. This program aims to study wolf ecology, pack dynamics and denning, and examine seasonal wolf movement patterns in relation to barren-ground caribou movements. GNWT-ECC collared four wolves in 2024 and nine more in 2025.
  - Ongoing – GNWT-ECC is collaborating with researchers at University of British Columbia (Nicola Love) and University of Alberta - Biodiversity Pathways (Dr. Robert Serrouya) and Michigan State University (Dr. Jerrold Belant) to investigate how predator-prey dynamics have changed by analyzing changes in wolf-caribou movement and space use during the Bathurst barren-ground caribou herd decline.

- Ongoing – GNWT-ECC has partnered with WMAC (NWT), SRRB, GRRB, WRRB and others on the Cumulative Effects Assessment of Barren-Ground Caribou Herds in the NWT, which uses the ALCES Online tool to track and simulate landscape change in combination with population dynamics (see Stubbs et al. 2023). The project simulates how the population of each herd may respond to changes in climate, vegetation, land-use, and harvest levels (CIMP207-BG; Pellissey and Routh 2023; Stubbs et al. 2023). Indigenous knowledge for each of the five herds was incorporated into the modeling. An online web mapping tool has been developed, which can be used to view different scenario outcomes. An Annual Regional Workshop of Barren-ground Caribou Herds was held in Inuvik and Yellowknife in March 2025. GNWT-ECC has presented on the project at various regional fora, including the ACCWM Annual Status Meeting, Geoscience Forum, annual NWT Wildlife Act Section 15 meeting, and the NWT CIMP Results Workshop.
- 2025-2026 – GNWT-ECC partnered with a contractor (Caslys Consulting) to update range maps for NWT barren-ground caribou herds.
- Ongoing – The Fate of the Caribou Project out of the State University of New York is a collaborative research group focused on furthering our understanding of how caribou and the ecosystems and communities that rely on them are affected by climate change and human development. WRRB, NSMA, GNWT-ECC, CARMA, and others are partners in this project. Research partnerships include soundscapes in caribou habitat (both winter and summer) partnered with NSMA and TG, and an investigation of survival patterns of barren-ground caribou with GNWT-ECC (CIMP241-BG), an analysis of interactions between barren-ground caribou and predators using motion-triggered cameras developed in partnership with KAA and GN (Larue et al. 2025), and population modelling to understand barren-ground caribou cycles (McConnell and Fagan in prep.). See also Brose et al. 2024; Brose et al. 2025a; and Brose et al. 2025b for a five-year research summary (2021-2025).
- 2020-2025 – TG and GNWT-ECC published annual reports for the 5-year Joint TG-GNWT Wolf (Dìga) Management Program (2020-2024). A comprehensive review of the program is underway as of 2025. WRRB is assisting with data analyses and final reporting.

- 2025 – Leaders from GNWT, YKDFN, TG, and NSMA released a statement urging respectful harvesting practices in March 2025 following a sharp increase in meat wastage/illegal hunting along the Tibbitt to Contwoyto Winter Road.
- 2025 – In August 2025 and November 2025, follow-ups to the Respected Harvesters meetings were held. The meetings brought together officials from Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations whose members harvest along the Tibbitt to Contwoyto Winter Road, members of the winter road Joint Venture, and representatives from the Caribou Guardians Coalition and the Wek'èezhìı Renewable Resources Board to continue to promote safe, legal and respectful harvesting through education efforts and managing access to and along the winter road.
- GNWT is working on best management practices for mitigating the effects of roads on barren-ground caribou. Through a literature review and Subject Matter Expert interviews, the best management practices summarizes current 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 identifies the effectiveness of these mitigation measures through mitigation monitoring or by expert opinion. The best management practices underwent internal GNWT review in late 2025 and public engagement is expected to begin in early 2026.

- **ECCC:** No update.
- **NSMA:**
  - NSMA runs a winter road monitoring program and we are currently in our 3rd year of CIMP funding to investigate cumulative effects. Last year we were able to look at caribou gut piles to get a minimum harvest number – and we are working on a publication to get an idea of how much was harvested.
  - We are looking for caribou, predators and disturbances.
  - We are also collecting caribou heads. The goal is to do some testing on harvested caribou to look at sex, jaw/teeth for age, a suite of health testing (pending funding). In addition, the GNWT will test for CWS and Universities

will do analysis in kind. Heads are being collected in the NSMA freezer and we will process these together.

Bats – GNWT, WRRB, TG, SRRB (+GRRB)

- **GRRB:**
  - We deployed 14 ultrasonic passive acoustics following NABAT protocols. They were deployed to all GSA communities – but they did not detect any bats. The only bat detector not collected was the location where the video was taken. We are working with the homeowner to collect this unit. Regardless, it was great to involve so many community members.
  - We also developed protocols for citizen science monitoring with kits that members can take out. And we have social media post about reporting sightings.
- **SRRB:** Nothing to report.
- **WRRB:**
  - We put out four ARU units along Tłı̨chǫ Highway, Tłı̨chǫ monitors were involved.
  - We have social media posts on reporting bats.
  - WRRB delivered a public presentation at the ecology North Mothball event.
  - WRRB considers key bat habitat in regulatory reviews.
- **GNWT:**
  - White-nose syndrome (WNS) keeps getting closer and closer to the NWT. GNWT continued with annual summer bat maternity colony monitoring and surveillance for Pd, the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome. Samples collected in 2025 for Pd testing are still being analyzed. The Pd fungus continues to spread and in 2025 it was detected in northern Alberta close to the NWT, just south of Wood Buffalo National Park. We have applied for funding to strengthen our monitoring for white-nose syndrome, including adding a spring bat capture program; work is being planned for May 2026.

- Also involved in research on using probiotics (healthy bacteria on skin that slows growth of the fungus). GNWT-ECC swabbed live bats and submitted them to a research project that is exploring the use of healthy bacteria on bat's skin (probiotics) to fight white-nose syndrome (Insuk *et al.* 2024; Insuk *et al.* 2025). Partners are exploring the potential expansion of the probiotic treatment project to the NWT. The work was featured in an online media article in 2025 (Cabin Radio 2025).
- As part of efforts to strengthen WNS surveillance in the NWT, GNWT-ECC published materials to encourage and support the collection of samples (e.g., bat guano): Fact sheet - White-nose syndrome and How to collect guano (bat poop) samples for DNA testing. As part of efforts to encourage people to avoid entering caves where bats may be hibernating, and in response to community feedback, GNWT-ECC developed a poster encouraging people to respect underground habitat.
- GNWT compiled unpublished results of GNWT's bat monitoring programs over the past five years, as well as NWT bat monitoring data from other sources, for inclusion in the SARC status report on little brown myotis and northern myotis. We also completed a comprehensive update of occurrence data and maps for all 8 bat species of the NWT for inclusion in the CMA's bat progress report. As part of this effort, GNWT worked with a contractor to complete manual verification and analysis of bat acoustic recordings collected 2021-2024.
- **Question:** Can you explain more about White Nose Syndrome?
- **Answer:** White Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a disease that affects bats through a fungus. After being introduced to North America the fungus was first detected in New York state and has been spreading out across the continent ever since. WNS has been causing population declines and high mortality in bats that hibernate. It is a big concern and has been spreading each year. Bat mortalities have been reported in Alberta. We have been tracking where the fungus is and where sick bats are detected. It is getting quite close to the NWT. We expect that it will get to the NWT quite soon.

- **NSMA:**

- We have some bat ARUs in Old Fort Rae which is in Dınàgà. Manually verified some of the recordings. Lots of hits of little brown myotis. Joanna came to Old Fort Rae with mist nets – but we didn't capture any. Specimens of little brown myotis have been found there.
- There are definitely bats in Dınàgà.

Northern Mountain Caribou – GNWT, GRRB, SRRB

- **GRRB**:
  - We conducted interviews with Gwich'in knowledge holders. Including information about key caribou habitat, preferences for movement, predators and environmental impacts. Wrapping up that report.
- **SRRB**:
  - The Nío Nę P'ęné project is going strong. Caribou fecal sample collection is going on in the mountains.
  - Outfitters state of knowledge report finally wrapped up. It is going through final checks, then it will be ready to share.
  - Spending a lot of time worrying about stuff going on in the mountains that might impact caribou. Outfitters disagreed with what they are seeing, so they are going to study mountain caribou as well including population estimates. Apparently, there are so many mountain caribou and people are crazy to be concerned about them. They also said there are so many calves. But they do not have any photos. They are calling it a validation of our project. The more research the better.
  - Partnering with Norman Wells RRC.
  - Had a few community meetings to get the Nío Nę P'ęné plan finalized. Hopefully it can get done this year.
- **GNWT**:
  - 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). New reports about this project were published in 2025, available at: https://www.gov.nt.ca/ecc/en/services/wildlife-management-and-monitoring-plans/wmmp-resources:
    - CZN - Phase 1 WR 2024 WMMP Annual Report June 2025 -
    - Wildlife Log for Prairie Creek and Phase 1 WR 2024 - June 2025
    - CZN Northern Mountain Caribou Collar Program_ Interim Data Summary_2025-08-07
  - Parks Canada (Colleen Murchison, Nahanni) is leading a multi-partner effort to update northern mountain caribou range delineations in NWT and Yukon in time for their inclusion in the next COSEWIC status report. This is to reflect new information including genetic analyses from fecal DNA, collared caribou movements, Indigenous knowledge, etc. GNWT is participating in this effort.
  - GNWT and co-management partners are preparing to host the 20th North American Caribou Workshop (NACW) in Yellowknife, NWT from June 15th to 19th, 2026. The theme for NACW-2026 will be United by Caribou.

Peary Caribou – GNWT, WMAC(NWT), ECCC

- **ECCC**:
  - Cheryl-Ann Johnson with Science and Technology branch of ECCC is hosting another Peary caribou meeting with communities this March as a continuation of the meeting from January 2025 and her ongoing work on Peary caribou important habitat. CWS will be attending as supporting and as a resource.
  - There are no other updates, but meeting is schedule from March 10-11 and invites were sent out.
- **WMAC (NWT)**:
  - WMAC (NWT) will be at the March 10-11 meeting hosted by ECCC.
  - Currently, WMAC (NWT) is supporting research looking at how rain-on-snow (ROS) events have changed throughout the ISR (ECCC - Cheryl-Ann Johnson) and other related impacts.

- WMAC (NWT) has created new social media platforms, including a Facebook "follow" page, to continue to advocate and share information on the importance of species to Inuvialuit culture within the ISR.
- Meetings are planned for March 2026 with ECCC and HTC/HTO's in Yellowknife to discuss research outcomes as well as future discussions regarding Peary caribou critical habitat and the recovery strategy.
- Mandatory sampling: WMAC continues to support sampling efforts, and currently there is a mandatory sampling regulation for Peary caribou.

- **GNWT**:
  - Updates will be provided at the next meeting.

Action 20260227-09: Secretariat will compile 2025 implementation summaries for the May 2026 meeting.

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

Overview of upcoming meetings

- May 13-14, 2026 (Yellowknife)
- *June 15-19, 2026 dates for the North American Caribou Workshop in Yellowknife*
- September 11, 2026 (virtual)
- *December 4, 2026 (*virtual; *dates TBC)*
- *February 25, 2027 (*virtual; *dates TBC)*
- *May 2027 (Inuvik – dates TBC)*