



NWT CONFERENCE OF MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

CONSENSUS AGREEMENT ON LISTING
PEARY CARIBOU
(Rangifer tarandus pearyi)

The Conference of Management Authorities has reached a consensus (hereafter referred to as the "Consensus Agreement") on the following:

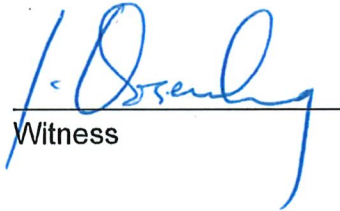
To add another 10-year term to the current expiration date for Peary caribou as a Threatened species on the Northwest Territories List of Species at Risk.

INTERPRETATION

For greater certainty, terms and processes in this Consensus Agreement are as defined and described in the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*.

For greater certainty, the Management Authorities for Peary caribou are: the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT) and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

WE THE UNDERSIGNED, having reached consensus, provide this Consensus Agreement on this 9th day of May 2023 to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Government of the Northwest Territories and the undersigned Management Authorities.


Witness



Larry Carpenter, Chair
Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)


Witness



Brett Elkin, Assistant Deputy Minister
Dept. of Environment and Climate Change
Government of the Northwest Territories

ANNEX A

REASONS FOR THE CONSENSUS AGREEMENT

Peary caribou has been listed as a Threatened species in the Northwest Territories (NWT) since 2014. On May 9, 2022, the NWT Species at Risk Committee (SARC) provided the reassessment and status report for Peary caribou (*Rangifer tarandus pearyi*) to the Conference of Management Authorities (CMA) and recommended that Peary caribou remain on the NWT List of Species at Risk as a Threatened species. The *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* provides a 12-month period for the CMA to develop a consensus agreement on listing.

This Consensus Agreement was informed by the completed species status report, SARC's assessment and reasons for assessment, public input (solicited by the Management Authorities), and the results of consultation. No information was provided to SARC by the CMA or the Management Authorities under paragraph 31(1)(c) of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*. Actions taken by the Management Authorities with respect to the required approvals and their preparation for the development of the Consensus Agreement on listing are described in Annex B of this Consensus Agreement.

Reasons for assessment that were noted by SARC:

SARC reassessed the biological status of Peary caribou as a Threatened species in the NWT during its meeting on May 2-5, 2022. An assessment of Threatened means that SARC determined Peary caribou is likely to become Endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction. The assessment process and objective biological criteria used by the Species at Risk Committee are based on Indigenous and community knowledge (ICK) and scientific knowledge (SK). SARC determined Peary caribou met criterion ICK (e) for Threatened and criteria SK (a) and (b) for Special Concern under SARC's Species Assessment Process:

Threatened ICK (e): There is concern expressed by knowledge holders that the species is likely to experience severe declines in the NWT in its abundance, habitat quality/quantity, movements, and/or range habitat quality/quantity, movements, and/or range, within their grandchildren's lifetimes.

Special Concern SK (a): The species has declined to a level of abundance at which its persistence is increasingly threatened by genetic, demographic, or environmental stochasticity, but the decline is not sufficient to qualify the species as Threatened.

Special Concern SK (b): The species may become Threatened if factors suspected of negatively influencing the persistence of the species are neither reversed nor managed with demonstrable effectiveness.

In applying the Precautionary Principle, which states that a lack of certainty will not be used as a reason to delay measures to alleviate a threat to a species at risk, the Species at Risk Committee determined an overall assessment of Threatened for Peary caribou.

Main factors (ICK):

- Peary caribou remain a preferred source of food for residents of Sachs Harbour and Ulukhaktok. Knowledge holders understand that Peary caribou populations naturally fluctuate widely.
- Sachs Harbour knowledge holders are reporting more caribou as well as signs of productivity including healthy caribou, large groups, big bulls and twins – suggesting that numbers are increasing. In recent years, Ulukhaktok knowledge holders are reporting relative stability at low densities. Increased numbers of Peary caribou are being observed however the population has yet to reach historic levels.
- Knowledge holders express concern that the species' medium- to long-term future may be uncertain. Based on these concerns Peary caribou may experience severe declines in the future.
- Knowledge holders noted that climate change could have negative effects on Peary caribou. For example, a warming climate and changing wind-ice regime could impede their ability to access important habitat and affect the way they cope with severe weather conditions.
- Knowledge holders have concerns about the negative effects of future industrial development and expanded shipping activities on Peary caribou. These threats, including climate change effects, are expected to increase within their grandchildren's lifetimes.
- Peary caribou require vast amounts of land and connectivity between and within islands, and habitat use depends on their annual life cycle and forage accessibility. Caribou may be less able to cope with severe weather events when sea-ice conditions are less robust.
- Sustained interventions are required to support Peary caribou recovery.

Main factors (SK):

- Subpopulations of Peary caribou in the NWT have increased, however they are still at lower levels than they were 40-60 years ago.

- Over the last three generations (1992 to 2019), Peary caribou on Banks Island have increased from an estimated 1,015 caribou to 1,913 caribou at an average annual rate of 3.3%.
- Primary factors believed to have contributed to declines in the past were over harvesting, predation, reduced forage availability caused by deep snow and icing/freezing rain events, and competition with high numbers of muskoxen.
- While some of the threats from the past have been mitigated, some are ongoing and continue to be a concern such as climate change, grizzly bear range expansion, industrial development and marine traffic.
- Although the population is currently showing signs of recovery, the lingering threats suggest that Peary caribou populations could decline in the future.

Additional factors:

- Inuvialuit Elders have seen a correlation between high muskoxen populations and low caribou populations, suggesting that muskox and caribou naturally cycle opposite to each other.
- Currently Peary caribou numbers are on the rise and muskoxen numbers are decreasing.
- Earlier green-up of vegetation related to climate change is potentially beneficial to the forage available for Peary caribou.

Decision of the Management Authorities

After reviewing the assessment and the results of engagement, the Management Authorities determined that adding another 10-year term to the current expiration date for Peary caribou as a Threatened species is appropriate based on SARC's status report and assessment, including the threats to this species. The Government of the Northwest Territories' assessment is that the action of adding another 10-year term to the current expiration date for Peary caribou as a Threatened species will not infringe on Aboriginal or treaty rights. Based on this, the Management Authorities agree that another 10-year term should be added to the current term for listing Peary caribou on the NWT List of Species at Risk as a Threatened species.

ANNEX B

ACTIONS THE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES HAVE UNDERTAKEN OR WILL UNDERTAKE WITH RESPECT TO LISTING

As provided for in section 50(3)(b) of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, the Management Authorities, having reached consensus on adding another 10-year term to the current term for Peary caribou (*Rangifer tarandus pearyi*) to the NWT List of Species at Risk as a Threatened species, are reporting the actions they have undertaken or agree to undertake with respect to the required approvals and their participation in listing the species:

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (WMAC) (NWT)'s position on the proposed re-listing of Peary caribou as a Threatened species was formed through review of the species status report, SARC's assessment, and its consultations with the Inuvialuit Game Council, and meetings with Hunters and Trappers Committees (HTCs) and community members of the communities of Inuvik, Aklavik, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Ulukhaktok. During the community meetings in Sachs Harbour and Ulukhaktok, the WMAC (NWT) collected new traditional knowledge indicating positive signs for the Peary caribou herd.

Government of the Northwest Territories

The Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) position on re-listing was formed through review of the species status report and assessment and engagement with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, as well as the public. The Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC) also worked with other GNWT departments through the Inter-departmental Species at Risk Committee.

Public Engagement

The GNWT provided an opportunity for members of the public and interested organizations to comment on the assessment and proposed re-listing of Peary caribou. The comment period was August 8-October 31, 2022. The GNWT invited comments using a news release, print ads, fact sheets, radio announcements, social media posts, an online survey, the GNWT public engagement portal and NWT Species at Risk website, and an email distribution list. The GNWT did not receive any comments on the re-listing of Peary caribou through this process.

Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations

The GNWT's assessment is that the action of adding another 10-year term to the current term for Peary caribou as a Threatened species will not infringe on Aboriginal or treaty rights. There are no automatic prohibitions or protections for species or habitat that come into effect upon adding another 10-year term to the current term. The action of listing the species under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* will not change harvest quotas, regulations or land management already in place. Work is underway to complete a recovery strategy for Peary caribou in the NWT, which will provide conservation and recovery goals and objectives for the species.

The GNWT engaged with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations (IGOs) through letters. IGOs located in or near the NWT range of Peary caribou were invited to comment on re-listing Peary caribou to the Northwest Territories (NWT) List of Species at Risk as a Threatened species for an additional term of 10 years. One group responded, sharing knowledge that more Peary caribou are being observed on Banks Island and expressing concern about insufficient use of Indigenous Knowledge in the assessment and listing process. The GNWT responded and shared additional information about Indigenous Knowledge that was incorporated in the species status report and how criteria based in Indigenous and community knowledge were used to assess the species. All the comments were recorded and were considered in forming the GNWT's position on listing.

The IGOs engaged are listed below. Full records of engagement are on file at Wildlife and Fish Division, ECC, Yellowknife.

- Inuvialuit Game Council
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated