

NUNAVUT PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2016 DRAFT NUNAVUT LAND USE PLAN

Kivalliq Wildlife Board

PRE-HEARING WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

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Kivalliq Wildlife Board
Submission for the Public Hearing on the 2016 Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan

1/13/2017

1 Background and Objectives

The Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB) is the Regional Wildlife Organization (RWO) for the Kivalliq Region. The board consists of representatives from each community Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTOs) in the Kivalliq region.

The mandate of RWOs and HTOs is contained in Article 5.7 of the 1993 *Nunavut Agreement*. The *Nunavut Agreement* gives HTOs and RWOs a broad mandate to oversee and manage Inuit wildlife harvesting in their respective communities and regions. The *Nunavut Agreement* also provides HTOs with a mandate to represent the interests of Inuit hunters and their hunting rights, including the right to sue on behalf of members for rights infringements (5.7.15).

The KWB and Kivalliq HTOs have participated in the Nunavut Planning Commission's development of a new land use plan for Nunavut since 2013. The KWB has written numerous letters and technical submissions to the planning commission, registered as an intervener in the planning process, consulted Kivalliq HTOs on their concerns, and participated in numerous technical meetings and workshops. The KWB's comments have focused primarily on caribou habitat protection and controls for marine shipping.

Throughout this process, the KWB has strongly advocated for a balanced approach to land use planning. The KWB's overriding goal in the planning process is to ensure that critical habitat for wildlife species hunted by Inuit, as well as lands critical to Inuit hunting activities, are provided with sufficient protection. At the same time, the KWB wishes to ensure that area protection of land does not undermine the mining economy in the Kivalliq region.

2 General Comments and Recommendations

In general, the KWB is pleased that the NPC has made progress in addressing most of the fundamental concerns of the KWB and Kivalliq HTOs. The fact that protections for caribou, walrus, and beluga whale habitat are included in the plan is a very positive development.

The KWB has concerns with the levels of protection offered in some cases. The current level of protection recommended for walrus haul outs appears insufficient. The full protection of caribou calving grounds is a matter of vital importance to the KWB, and the KWB is pleased that caribou calving grounds and water crossings are afforded full protection in the draft land use plan. However, the KWB recognizes that many of our members depend upon the mining industry for employment. As a result, the KWB is concerned with the large amounts of land protected for caribou post-calving and the large buffers around caribou water crossings. The protection of caribou habitat goes well-beyond what the KWB envisions for a 'balanced' land use plan for our region.

The KWB recommends the following.

- 1) Maintain the level of protection for caribou calving grounds. The draft land use plan contains full protection for core caribou calving grounds. The full protection of core caribou calving grounds is of fundamental importance to the KWB and Kivalliq HTOs. The KWB hopes that this level of protection will be maintained in the final land use plan.
- 2) Maintain protection for caribou water crossings and post calving grounds, but decrease the amount of land dedicated to protecting these areas. Mining and exploration should be prohibited at and near water crossings, but the buffer should be much smaller (5 or 10 km). Mining and exploration should be prohibited in some parts of the post calving grounds, but only those areas that caribou use the most during the first week after the calving season ends.
- 3) Increase the buffer around walrus haul-outs. The draft land use plan prohibits marine shipping traffic within 5 kilometers of walrus haul-outs. The KWB does not believe 5 km is a large enough buffer. Marine shipping should be prohibited within 10km of walrus haul-outs, at minimum.

3 Specific Comments and Recommendations

3.1 Caribou Calving Areas [p. 27, sec. 2.2.1.1]

3.1.1 Comment

The KWB is pleased that the draft land use plan contains full protection for core caribou calving areas.

The KWB believes that mining and mineral exploration are not appropriate activities in core caribou calving areas. The protection of caribou calving areas has been a priority for KWB, Kivalliq HTOs, other wildlife management institutions, and other indigenous communities for many years.

3.1.2 Recommendation(s)

Maintain the current levels of protection for caribou calving areas. Mining, mineral exploration, and oil/gas extraction should be prohibited in these vital areas.

3.1.3 Rationale

The KWB has recommended the full protection of caribou calving grounds since February 2013, when the KWB passed the first of many resolutions recommending mining and mineral exploration be banned in calving grounds.¹ The KWB passed resolutions in October 2013 and October 2015, reaffirming its position that mining and mineral exploration should not be permitted in caribou calving grounds.

The KWB position is based upon the recommendation of wildlife biologists, Inuit Elders, Kivalliq HTOs, co-management boards, and Metis and Dene communities.

Biologists

Biologists working for the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, and the World Wildlife Fund Canada have all communicated the need to prohibit mining and mineral exploration to the Kivalliq Wildlife Board. Some of these biologists made formal presentations to the KWB and Kivalliq HTO boards regarding the need to protect caribou calving grounds. Others made similar presentations at meetings hosted by other organizations (for example, the NWMB) in which KWB and Kivalliq HTO board members and staff participated in.

Biologists have told the KWB that caribou are very vulnerable to disturbance during the calving season. If caribou are disturbed while giving birth or nursing newborns, they may abandon their calves. Disturbance during this critical period could also interrupt nursing or prevent female caribou from eating enough. This could, in turn, cause them to put on less fat, and threaten the survival of both calf and cow through the winter. All of this could have a significant impact on the caribou population, according to these biologists.

Biologists have also told the KWB that caribou herds are currently *declining* and *vulnerable* across Nunavut. Some herds have declined severely, and in some northern Aboriginal communities quotas or outright bans have been placed on caribou. There is likely many factors working together to cause the decline in caribou

¹ <http://nunavut.ca/files/KWB%20Calving%20Grounds%20Resolution%20-%20February%202013.pdf>

numbers. Caribou go through long-term population cycles, slowly increasing, then peaking, and then decreasing, over many years. Climate change, disturbance from mining and exploration, forest fires, increased predation by wolves and other carnivores, and increased harvest by humans are also all likely playing a role.

Biologists have explained to the KWB that when caribou populations are low, herds are more *vulnerable* to disturbance. With fewer caribou to mate and give birth, disturbing just a small number of cows during calving season could have major repercussions for the health of the herd. Even if mineral exploration in caribou calving grounds has not *caused* the current decline in caribou numbers, allowing companies to significantly disturb calving grounds could cause the decline to become much more severe.

Elders

The KWB and Kivalliq HTOs have also consulted with Elders about mining and exploration in calving grounds. The KWB facilitated workshops with Kivalliq HTOs in the fall of 2015, to discuss the protection of caribou habitat. In Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Whale Cove, and Naujaat, knowledgeable Elders and hunters were invited to attend the workshop. In Arviat and Chesterfield Inlet, radio call-in shows were held on the topic, and Elders participated. In all cases, Elders recommended banning mining and exploration in calving grounds. They argued that allowing mining in these areas could cause caribou herds to decline. Some elders said that Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit teaches that caribou are very sensitive during this phase in their lifecycle. Caribou need to eat and feed their young without interruption after birth. This sensitivity is reflected in traditional hunting seasons – some elders said they were taught to not hunt cows or calves during the spring and summer, and instead focus on hunting bulls during this period.

The GN has an Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Advisory Committee, which is made up of Elders. At an NPC technical meeting, a representative of this committee told participants that the Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Advisory Committee recommended banning mining and exploration in calving grounds.

Kivalliq HTOs

All mainland HTOs in the Kivalliq region have repeatedly recommended that mining and exploration be prohibited in the calving grounds.

- The Arviat HTO submitted comments to the NPC recommending mining and exploration be prohibited in caribou calving grounds.² The Arviat HTO had previously written letters to the Nunavut Impact Review Board, protesting Anconia's exploration project in the calving grounds.^{3 4}
- The Issatik HTO submitted comments to the NPC, recommending mining and exploration be prohibited in caribou calving grounds.⁵ The Issatik HTO had previously written to NIRB, opposing Anconia's project in the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds.⁶

² <http://nunavut.ca/files/2015-09-24%20Arviat%20HTO%20NLUP%20Submission.pdf>

³ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/02-DISTRIBUTION/CORRESPONDENCE/120125-11EN046-Arviat%20HTO%20Late%20Comments-IMCE.jpg>

⁴ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/02-DISTRIBUTION/CORRESPONDENCE/121220-11EN046-Arviat%20HTO%20Comments-LATE-IA2E.jpg>

⁵ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2015-09-30%20Whale%20Cove%20HTO%20-%20Final%20Hearing%20Submission.pdf>

⁶ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/06-FOLLOW-UP/130301-11EN046-WC%20HTO%20Comments-IA2E.docx>

- At a meeting with KWB staff, the Kangiq&iniq HTO agreed that mining and mineral exploration should not be allowed in caribou calving grounds. The Kangiq&iniq HTO previously wrote a letter to NIRB, supporting the Baker Lake, Arviat, Issatik, and Aqigiq HTOs in their attempt to stop Anconia's exploration in the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds.⁷
- The Aqigiq HTO submitted comments to the NPC, recommending mining and mineral exploration not be permitted in caribou calving grounds. The Aqigiq HTO had previously written to NIRB, opposing Anconia's exploration in the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds.⁸
- The Baker Lake HTO has made several submissions to the NPC recommending mining and mineral exploration be banned in caribou calving grounds.^{9 10} The Baker Lake HTO had previously voiced opposition to mining in caribou calving and post calving grounds, in submissions to NIRB for Anconia's exploration project in the Qamanirjuaq calving grounds.¹¹
- The Arviq HTO has made several submissions to the NPC, recommending mining and mineral exploration be prohibited in caribou calving grounds.^{12 13}

Metis and Dene Communities

Many of the caribou herds that give birth and nurse their young in Nunavut migrate to the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba for the winter. These herds are an integral part of the culture and subsistence lifestyle of many First Nations and Metis communities located in the NWT, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. This gives those communities an interest in the way caribou calving grounds and post-calving grounds are managed in Nunavut. Activity in calving grounds may impact their aboriginal and treaty rights to harvest caribou. Many of these communities have written to NIRB and NPC, opposing mining/exploration in caribou calving grounds.

- The Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (located in NWT) has recommended full protection for caribou calving and post-calving grounds to the NPC.¹⁴ The Lutsel K'e First nation has written to NIRB, opposing numerous proposals in Nunavut calving grounds, including MMG's Izok lake proposal,¹⁵ and Uravan's Gary Lakes proposal.¹⁶
- The Athabasca Denesuline Negotiating Team (representing Dene communities in Saskatchewan) recommended full protection for caribou calving grounds to the NPC.^{17 18} The Athabasca

⁷ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/06-FOLLOW-UP/130521-11EN046-RI%20HTO%20Comments-IA2E.docx>

⁸ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/130218-11EN046-Aqigik%20HTO%20Comments-IA1E.pdf>

⁹ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2015-09-15%20BLHTO%20NPC%20Submission.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2013-11-05%20Baker%20Lake%20HTO%20Motion%20re%20Caribou.pdf>

¹¹ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/06-FOLLOW-UP/120622-11EN046-Baker%20Lake%20HTO%20Ltr%20to%20NIRB%20Re%20Motion-IEDE.pdf>

¹² <http://nunavut.ca/files/2015-10-20%20Arviq%20HTO%20Submission.pdf>

¹³ [http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-02-10%20Repulse%20Bay%20\(Arviq\)%20HTO%20Motion%20re%20Caribou.pdf](http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-02-10%20Repulse%20Bay%20(Arviq)%20HTO%20Motion%20re%20Caribou.pdf)

¹⁴ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-01-31%20LKDFN%20Letter%20to%20NPC%20re%20NLUP%20and%20Caribou.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/02-REVIEWS/ACTIVE%20REVIEWS/12MN043-MMG%20IZOK%20CORRIDOR/1-SCREENING/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/121207-12MN043-Lutsel%20Ke%20Dene%20FN%20Comments-IT2E.doc>

¹⁶ <ftp://ftp.nirb.ca/02-REVIEWS/ACTIVE%20REVIEWS/08EN037-URAVAN%20GARRY%20LAKE/1-SCREENING/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/080627-08EN037-LKDFN%20Comments-IMAE.doc>

¹⁷ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2013-12->

¹¹ [http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-10-20%20Letter%20from%20Athabasca%20Denesuline%20re%20the%20DNLUP.pdf](http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-10-20%20Letter%20from%20Athabasca%20Denesuline%20Ne%20Ne%20Land%20Corporation%20re%20the%20DNLUP.pdf)

¹⁸ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-10-20%20Letter%20from%20Athabasca%20Denesuline%20re%202014%20DNLUP.pdf>

Denesuline had written to NIRB, opposing numerous projects in calving grounds, including Anoncia's Marce Lake Project,¹⁹ MMG's Izok Lake project,²⁰ and UraVan's Gary Lakes project.²¹

- Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (a co-management board created by Dene claims in the NWT) recommended full protection for caribou calving and post-calving grounds to the NPC.²² The WRRB wrote to NIRB, opposing Tundra Copper's exploration in the Bluenose calving grounds.²³
- The Northlands Dene First Nation (located in Manitoba) has recommended full protection for caribou calving and post calving grounds to the NPC.²⁴
- The Sayisi Dene First Nation (located in Manitoba) has recommended full protection for caribou calving and post calving grounds to the NPC.²⁵
- The Fort Smith Metis Council (located in NWT) has recommended full protection for caribou calving and post-calving grounds to the NPC.²⁶
- The Northwest Territories Metis Nation (located in NWT) has recommended full protection for caribou calving and post-calving grounds to the NPC.²⁷
- The Tlicho Government (located in NWT) wrote to NIRB, opposing Tundra Copper's exploration in the Bluenose calving grounds.²⁸
- The North Slave Metis Alliance (located in NWT) wrote to NIRB, opposing Tundra Copper's exploration in the Bluenose calving grounds.²⁹
- The Yellowknives Dene First Nation (located in NWT) wrote to NIRB, opposing MMG's Izok Lake project in the Bathurst calving grounds.³⁰

¹⁹ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2012/11EN046-Anconia%20Resources-Marce%20Claims/06-FOLLOW-UP/120528-11EN046-Athabasca%20Denesuline%20Ltr%20to%20Minister%20Re%20Concerns-IDTE.pdf>

²⁰ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/02-REVIEWS/ACTIVE%20REVIEWS/12MN043-MMG%20IZOK%20CORRIDOR/1-SCREENING/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/121204-12MN043-Athabasca%20Denesuline%20Comments-IA1E.pdf>

²¹ <ftp://ftp.nirb.ca/02-REVIEWS/ACTIVE%20REVIEWS/08EN037-URAVAN%20GARRY%20LAKE/1-SCREENING/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/080609-08EN037-ADNT%20Comments-IMAE.pdf>

²² <http://nunavut.ca/files/2015-06-09%20WRRB%20re%20DNLUP.pdf>

²³ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2015/15EN009-Tundra%20Copper-Hope%20Lake/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/150504-15EN009-Wek'eezhi%20Comments-IA1E.pdf>

²⁴ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-05-27%20Letter%20from%20Northlands%20Denesuline%20re%20Caribou.pdf>

²⁵ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-05-15%20Letter%20from%20Sayisi%20Dene%20First%20Nation%20re%20Caribou.pdf>

²⁶ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-02-05%20Letter%20from%20Fort%20Smith%20Metis%20re%20Caribou.pdf>

²⁷ <http://nunavut.ca/files/2014-02->

<21%20Letter%20from%20NWTMN%20re%20Protection%20of%20Caribou%20Calving%20Grounds.pdf>

²⁸ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2015/15EN009-Tundra%20Copper-Hope%20Lake/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/150416-15EN009-Tlicho%20Comments-IA1E.pdf>

²⁹ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/01-SCREENINGS/COMPLETED%20SCREENINGS/2015/15EN009-Tundra%20Copper-Hope%20Lake/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/150511-15EN009-NSMA%20Comments-IMTE.pdf>

³⁰ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/02-REVIEWS/ACTIVE%20REVIEWS/12MN043-MMG%20IZOK%20CORRIDOR/1-SCREENING/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/121127-12MN043-YK%20Dene%20First%20Nation%20Comments-IA2E.doc>

- The Dene Nation (located in NWT) wrote to NIRB, opposing MMG's Izok Lake project in the Bathurst calving grounds.³¹

3.2 Caribou Post Calving Areas [pg. 27, sec. 2.2.1.3]

The KWB has also recommended caribou post-calving grounds be protected under the new Nunavut Land Use Plan. However, the KWB feels that the amount of land set aside as protected areas for post-calving grounds in the DNLUP may unnecessarily harm the territory's mining industry.

Currently, post-calving areas are defined as the areas caribou cows/calves use most often for the *month* after the calving season (June 15-July 15).

The KWB recommends that only the *immediate* post-calving areas be fully protected. The areas most heavily used by caribou cows use to nurse their young in the first week after calving (June 15-June 22) should be fully protected. No mineral exploration or mining should be permitted in these areas. The remainder of the post-calving grounds should be protected with mobile and/or seasonal restrictions.

3.3 Water Crossings [pg. 27, sec. 2.2.1.4]

3.3.1 Comment

KWB is pleased that water crossings are protected under the draft Nunavut land use plan. However, the KWB is concerned that the buffer zones around caribou water crossings (20km) are unnecessarily large. The KWB is also concerned that many important water crossings are not included in the draft land use plan.

3.3.2 Recommendations

KWB recommends the buffer around water crossings be reduced to 5 or 10 km.

KWB recommends NPC consult with BQCMB and INAC to ensure that all recognized water crossings are protected under the Nunavut Land Use Plan.

³¹ <http://ftp.nirb.ca/02-REVIEWS/ACTIVE%20REVIEWS/12MN043-MMG%20IZOK%20CORRIDOR/1-SCREENING/02-DISTRIBUTION/COMMENTS/121207-12MN043-Dene%20Nation%20Comments-IT2E.pdf>

3.3.3 Rational

Caribou water crossings must be protected for their heritage, cultural/economic, and ecological values. Inuit Qaujimaqatuqangit clearly shows that mining and mineral exploration are not appropriate activities near caribou water crossings. Inuit from Baker Lake have fought since the 1970s to ensure that these important areas are protected, and this has been recognized in the federal government's caribou protection measures and the Kivalliq Inuit Association's land use regulations for Inuit Owned Lands.

Historically, hunting at water crossings was one of the most important subsistence activities for inland Inuit in the Kivalliq. As a result, they have a strong heritage value for many Kivalliq Inuit.

During many oral history studies, Kivalliq Inuit have explained that they harvested most of their meat for caching, and most of their furs for winter clothing, at water crossings during the fall caribou migrations. Traditionally, caribou would be hunted in the water, by *qajaq*, or in the ground, after they emerge from the water. Many of the most important traditional campsites were located near water crossings. A great deal of 'archeological artefacts' (graves, tent rings, tools, etc.) are located near caribou water crossings, and Inuit elders teach that 'artefacts' of this sort should not be disturbed. As a result, caribou water crossings have a strong heritage value for many Kivalliq Inuit.

Caribou water crossings remain important for caribou hunting, especially in the communities of Baker Lake and Arviat. As a result, they have strong cultural/economic values for many Inuit.

Numerous land use studies have shown that Baker Lake and Arviat Inuit continue to hunt at caribou water crossings, especially on the Thelon, Kazan, and Maguse Rivers, and the Chesterfield Inlet channel. It is an important part of cultural continuity for new generations of Inuit to learn how to properly hunt at water crossings, giving caribou water crossings strong cultural value. The meat harvested at water crossings is important for food security in Baker Lake and Arviat, giving caribou water crossings strong economic value.

Caribou are very sensitive to disturbance at and near water crossings. Disturbing water crossings could cause caribou to change their migration routes. This could disturb seasonal cycles, impacting the health of herds. It could also cause problems for community access to caribou herds, impacting community hunting. As a result, water crossings have important ecological values.

Inuit have many rules to protect and respect caribou water crossings, including:

- i. Do not walk, hunt, skin animals, cache meat or camp on the side of the river where caribou enter the water. Even footprints will disturb caribou.
- ii. Camp upstream from water crossings; camps should not be visible from the crossing
- iii. Clean up all animal remains near a crossing. Even blood on the ground should be buried.
- iv. Dogs and people should be silent at water crossings
- v. Do not hunt the first group of caribou that cross the water. The rest of the herd follows this leading group, and if the leaders are hunted, the others may not follow across the water at the crossing.
- vi. Do not hunt the first caribou in the group (the leaders of the group). This will disorient the other caribou who follow. The leaders should be allowed to pass, and the followers can be hunted.

These rules were used to ensure that caribou would return to the same water crossings year after year, with predictable migration routes, to ensure successful hunts. The archeological record shows that Inuit followed these rules carefully – there are few artefacts located near the areas where caribou enter the

water, and there are large concentrations of artefacts in areas where traditional rules permit camping. Elders and older hunters reported that they continue to teach these rules to younger generations, and that they are important parts of Inuit culture.

Inuit from other regions, as well as Dene in the NWT and Saskatchewan, have similar traditional rules to respect and protect water crossings.

Mining and exploration activity is entirely inconsistent with these traditional rules. If Inuit were taught not to make footprints in certain areas, how could drilling, prospecting, and camp construction be allowed? If Inuit hunting camps could not be visible near water crossings, how could a mine or exploration camp be permitted nearby? If Inuit hunting camps must be especially quiet when located near a crossing, how could helicopters, blasting, and drilling be permitted?

Over the years, there have been many requests to protect water crossings, supported by Kivalliq Inuit.

- In 1974, Inuit from Baker Lake sent a petition to the Government of Canada, protesting exploration in important hunting areas at caribou crossings on the Kazan River, Thelon River, and Baker Lake. This was followed by a series of requests for a freeze on development until land claims could be settled, by both the community and ITC.
- In 1978, the community of Baker Lake and ITC took the Federal Government to court, in an attempt to stop uranium exploration in important hunting areas and caribou habitat. Several Inuit testified at the hearings. Much of their testimony focused on concerns with impacts of exploration on water crossings.
- The existing INAC Caribou Protection Measures and KIA land use regulations prohibits permanent changes to the landscape within 5-10 km of caribou water crossings.
- In 1995, a water crossing on the Kazan River system was designated a National Historic Site (NHS) by Parks Canada. It was selected because of its significance to the community of Baker Lake and the “cultural, spiritual, and economic life of the Inuit in the Keewatin Region.”
- In 2007, NTI held a consultation meeting in Baker Lake to develop a new uranium policy. The Baker Lake HTO requested that uranium policy not be permitted near the Thelon and Kazan rivers. Both rivers contain many important caribou crossings.
- The NPC held public meetings for the development of a new land use plan in the Kivalliq Region in the fall of 2013. At a community mapping session, Inuit from Baker Lake requested to have caribou water crossings protected.
- The Baker Lake and Arviat HTOs have submitted comments to the NPC, requesting protection for caribou water crossings.

For further information on caribou water crossings, please refer to the reports, “Inuit Knowledge of Caribou Habitat: Background Report” and “Inuit Knowledge of Caribou Habitat, Workshop Report”. Both reports were submitted to the NPC by the Baker Lake HTO.

3.4 Walrus Haul-Outs [pg. 28, sec. 2.4]

3.4.1 Comment

The KWB is pleased that the draft land use plan contains protection for walrus haul-outs. However, the current protection for these sensitive areas appears to be insufficient.

3.4.1 Recommendation(s)

Increase the size of the buffer around walrus haul-outs. Marine shipping should not be permitted within a minimum 10km of a recognized walrus haul-out.

3.4.2 Rationale

Walrus haul-outs have important cultural/economic and ecological values. They are important for Inuit hunting and important walrus habitat.

Over the past years, hunters from Coral Harbour have repeatedly expressed concerns that increases in marine shipping associated with mining have negatively impacted walrus haul-outs between Southampton and Coates islands. Shipping has caused walrus to avoid traditional haul-outs, which has negatively impacted Coral Harbour's hunting lifestyle.

At a KWB workshop, the Coral Harbour HTO raised a number of concerns with the impacts of industrial activity and ship traffic on walrus haul-outs. The HTO directors said that the community has observed increased ship traffic. This has negatively impacted walrus haul-outs on Walrus Island. The HTO was also concerned that other industrial activity could impact walrus haul-outs. Board members explained that there are traditional rules in Inuit culture to protect and respect walrus haul-outs, and that Inuit are taught not to hunt walrus when they are hauled out on shore. If walrus are shot on a haul-out, the other walrus will not return to the area.

The Coral Harbour HTO has repeatedly requested that ships travel south of Coates Island, rather than travelling between Southampton and Coates islands.

The Coral Harbour HTO recommended that walrus haul outs be protected from industrial activity, and that marine shipping be prohibited within 20 km of walrus haul outs.