

**Kivalliq Wildlife Board submission to the Nunavut Planning
Commission**

Fourth Technical Meeting: Caribou Habitat and Marine Shipping Issues

February 26, 2016

CARIBOU HABITAT

1) Mainland Caribou Calving Grounds – Protected Areas

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan provides protection for core caribou calving grounds in areas that are not designated as “high mineral potential”. The calving areas that have high mineral potential are given no protection.

Recommendation #1 – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan designate core calving grounds and key access corridors (as defined by the Government of Nunavut) protected areas, regardless of their mineral potential. Mining, exploration, quarries, all-season roads, and winter roads should not be permitted in these areas.

All mainland HTOs recommended mining and exploration activity be banned in caribou calving grounds during workshops with the KWB. Elders in each community stated that protecting caribou calving grounds was vital for the sustainability of caribou herds. The wisdom and values of Elders is an important aspect of Inuit knowledge, or IQ. Elders explained that there are traditional rules to protect caribou during calving and caribou calving grounds. Inuit have traditional hunting seasons, and do not hunt cows and calves during the spring and summer months. Further, many Elders instruct hunters to avoid making permanent changes to the landscape in calving grounds (e.g. they teach that cabins and other permanent structures should not be built in calving grounds).

The KWB has repeatedly recommended that mining and exploration should not take place in or near caribou calving grounds. The KWB has passed numerous resolutions to this effect, and has submitted them to the NPC. The KWB has also written letters requesting the Government of Canada, NTI, and the Regional Inuit Associations place a moratorium on mining and exploration in caribou calving grounds until the land use planning process is complete.

Kivalliq HTOs repeatedly opposed development in caribou calving grounds during NIRB screenings and reviews. Uravan’s Gary Lakes proposal, Anconia’s Victory Lake proposal, and AREVA’s Kiggavik proposals are all examples of this opposition. Dene and Metis communities that hunt migratory herds that give birth in Nunavut have repeatedly opposed development in caribou calving grounds during NIRB screenings and reviews. Uravan’s Gary Lakes proposal, Anconia’s Victory Lake proposal, AREVA’s Kiggavik proposal, Tundra Copper’s Coppermine proposal, and MMG’s Izok Lake Corridor proposal are all examples of this opposition. The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) has repeatedly recommended that mining and exploration be banned in caribou calving grounds. See *Appendix A* for a list of examples of letters and motions from HTOs and other groups opposing mining and exploration in caribou calving grounds.

It is important to note that the Nunavut Impact Review Board has repeatedly recommended that the land use planning process deal with the question of mining and exploration in caribou calving grounds. In numerous screening decision reports, the NIRB has made it clear that this question is outside of its jurisdiction, and is causing significant public concern. As this question is outside of the NIRB’s mandate, it must be dealt with by the NPC.

The GN's definition of "core" calving grounds do not encompass all areas caribou use for calving. Both science and traditional knowledge show that caribou give birth outside of these core areas. The BQCMB, for example, has recommended that much larger "traditional" calving grounds be protected. The KWB believes that core calving grounds and key access corridors are the minimum areas that require protection to properly protect caribou.

2) Mainland Caribou Post Calving Grounds – Protected Areas

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan provides protection for core caribou post-calving grounds in areas that are not designated as "high mineral potential". The post-calving areas that have high mineral potential are given no protection.

Recommendation #3 – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan designate core post-calving grounds (as defined by the Government of Nunavut) protected areas, regardless of their mineral potential. Mining, exploration, quarries, all-season roads, and winter roads should not be permitted in these areas.

The KWB has repeatedly recommended that mining and exploration should not take place in caribou post-calving grounds. The KWB has passed numerous resolutions to this effect, and has submitted them to the NPC. Various HTOs in the Kivalliq region have taken the same position. There are traditional rules to protect caribou during post-calving season. Inuit have traditional hunting seasons, and do not hunt cows and calves during the spring and summer months.

It is important to note that the GN's "core" post-calving grounds are frequently used by caribou for calving. Protecting the core post-calving grounds will go a long way towards protecting not just post-calving grounds, but actual calving grounds as well.

The GN's definition of "core" post-calving grounds do not encompass all areas caribou use during the post-calving season. Both science and traditional knowledge show that caribou nurse their young outside of these core areas. The BQCMB, for example, has recommended that much larger "traditional" post-calving grounds be protected. The KWB believes that core post-calving grounds are the minimum areas that require protection to properly protect caribou.

3) Southampton and Coates Island Caribou Calving Grounds – Seasonal Restrictions as Interim Protection

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan does not contain any provisions for caribou habitat on Southampton and Coates Islands

Recommendation #4 – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan place seasonal restrictions on all land use on Southampton and Coates Island as interim protection, until sufficient data can be collected to properly delineate core calving and post-calving grounds on these islands. Mining and exploration activities should not be permitted during the calving and post calving season on these islands.

There is currently a lack of data on the seasonal migrations of caribou on Southampton and Coates Island. The Government of Nunavut has not delineated core calving or post calving grounds for these islands. Until this data is collected, the KWB recommends that seasonal restrictions should be placed on all mining and exploration activity on these islands. Once sufficient data is collected, calving and post calving grounds should be designated protected areas. The Coral Harbour HTO supported seasonal restrictions at a workshop with the KWB.

4) Mainland Caribou Water Crossings – Protected Areas

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan does not contain any provisions for caribou water crossings.

Recommendation #5 – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan designate caribou water crossings protected areas. Mining, exploration, quarries, all-season roads, and winter roads should not be permitted within 10km of known water crossings.

The issue of caribou water crossings was raised at the Baker Lake and Arviat HTO workshops. Both communities recommended protecting known caribou water crossings. A submission from the Baker Lake HTO included a research report and workshop report, which contain information about the importance of water crossings to caribou and caribou hunting. The reports state that water crossings are essential hunting areas for Inuit in Baker Lake, water crossings are important areas for cultural heritage, and water crossings are sensitive habitat for caribou. The reports also list many traditional rules for caribou water crossings, which are inconsistent with mining and exploration. The report also details a long history, dating back to the 1970s, of Inuit in Baker Lake fighting to protect caribou water crossings from mining and development.

The Government of Canada has recognized the ecological and heritage value of water crossings through legislation. Some water crossings are subject to seasonal protection through the federal government's Caribou Protection Measures. Select water crossings on the Kazan have been designated Heritage Areas by Parks Canada. The Kivalliq Inuit Association also protects some water crossings on Inuit Owned Lands through its land use permits.

In their submissions, the Arviat and Baker Lake HTOs mapped out water crossings based on Inuit knowledge, or IQ. Maps of additional known water crossings that also warrant protection are included in *Appendix B*.

5) Migration Routes – Seasonal Restrictions

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan does not contain any provisions for caribou migration routes.

Recommendation #6 – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan places seasonal restrictions on caribou migration routes. Mining and exploration activity should not be permitted during the migration season.

It is important that caribou migration routes are not disturbed. If routes are disturbed, caribou might not reach the habitat they need for calving, mating, and winter feeding. This could have negative impacts on the number of caribou.

Predictable caribou migration routes are also very important for caribou hunting by Inuit and other indigenous groups that harvest from mainland herds that migrate through Nunavut. If migration routes are disturbed, caribou may not reach favoured hunting locations like water crossings. Major changes in migrations could make caribou inaccessible for some communities.

The Government of Nunavut has provided maps of seasonal migration routes, and has also recommended seasonal restrictions on these areas.

6) Mobile Protection Measures

Recommendation #7 – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan requires proponents to commit to abiding by “mobile caribou protection measures”. Mining and exploration activity should temporarily cease when caribou are found near the project, especially during calving, post-calving, rutting, and migration seasons.

Areas identified for protection are based on Government collar data. They are the areas most heavily used by caribou during calving, post-calving, and migration seasons. However, from year to year, caribou frequently utilize areas outside of these “core” areas. Caribou must be protected from disturbance when they are outside of the core areas. Mobile Protection Measures can help provide this protection from disturbance. When caribou are near a mining or exploration project, the project activities must cease until caribou pass through the area. These rules must be especially strict during calving, post-calving, rutting, and migration seasons.

Marine Shipping Issues

1) Sea ice and travel routes

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan does not provide protection for Inuit hunters' travel routes over sea ice

Recommendation – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan include seasonal restrictions prohibiting marine transportation that would destroy areas of sea ice Inuit hunters rely upon for travel in winter months.

It is widely acknowledged that sea ice is absolutely integral to numerous traditional Inuit practices, including wildlife harvesting, camping, and travel. Marine shipping activities that destroy sea ice used for travel would have significant negative impacts on Inuit traditional practices that could not be mitigated. Travel between communities, as well as travel to hunting/camping sites would be impacted.

2) Floe Edge

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan does not protect the floe edge from damage from marine shipping.

Recommendation – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan include seasonal restrictions to prohibit marine transportation that would damage the floe edge, or cause the floe edge to break up prematurely in the spring.

The floe edge is an essential site for hunting marine mammals. Damage to the floe edge from marine shipping could seriously impede the ability of communities to hunt marine mammals during the winter and spring. The Coral Harbour HTO has indicated that marine traffic has prematurely damaged the floe edge in the past, and that it had a significant impact on the community.

3) Chesterfield Inlet

The Draft Land Use Plan does not contain restrictions on shipping through Chesterfield Inlet.

Recommendation – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan designate Chesterfield Inlet a special management area. Management restrictions should limit the volume of ships permitted to travel through the inlet on an annual basis.

Hunters and Elders from Chesterfield Inlet and Baker Lake have repeatedly complained about the impacts of increased shipping through the inlet, associated with the Meadowbank gold mine. There is a well-documented record of observations of changes in sea mammal distribution. Hunters complain that increased shipping has driven sea mammals out of the inlet during the shipping season, impacting wildlife harvesting. The Aqigiq (Chesterfield Inlet) HTO

recommended that the Nunavut Land Use Plan limit the amount of ships that travel through the inlet.

4) Coates, Southampton, and Walrus Island

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan does not contain restrictions on shipping near Coates, Southampton, and Walrus islands.

Recommendation – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan restrict shipping near Coates, Southampton, and Walrus Islands. Marine shipping routes should be placed south of Coates Island, rather than between Coates and Southampton Island.

Hunters and Elders from Coral Harbour have repeatedly complained about the impacts of marine ship traffic on walrus habitat between Coates and Southampton islands. In particular, the walrus haul-outs on Walrus Island have been impacted by shipping. At a KWB workshop, the Coral Harbour HTO recommended that ship traffic be rerouted to the south of Coates Island.

5) Walrus Haul-Outs

The Draft Nunavut Land Use Plan “provides direction to regulatory authorities to mitigate impacts” on walrus haul-outs.

Recommendation – the KWB recommends that the Nunavut Land Use Plan provide increased protection for walrus haul-outs. Mining, exploration, and related activities should be prohibited at walrus haul-out sites. Marine shipping traffic should be required to maintain a minimum distance of 20km from walrus haul-out sites.

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 negatively impacts 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 HTO recommended that walrus haul-outs be protected from industrial activity, and that marine transportation should be banned within 20km of walrus haul-outs.

6) Beluga Calving Grounds Near Southampton Island

Recommendation – the Kivalliq Wildlife Board recommends beluga whale calving grounds near Southampton Island be designated protected areas. Mining, oil, and gas development and associated activities should be banned within 30km of these areas. Marine traffic should maintain a minimum distance of 30km from these areas.

At the 2016 workshop with the KWB, the Coral Harbour HTO noted the location of two beluga whale calving grounds near the east shore of Southampton Island. The HTO indicated that

calving is a sensitive time for beluga whales, and that these areas should be protected from disturbance and habitat destruction. The HTO recommended that Mining, oil, and gas development and marine transportation be banned within 30km of the calving areas.