

The Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board

PRESS RELEASE

BQCMB will visit communities on the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq ranges to discuss caribou issues following Caribou Workshop

STONEWALL, Manitoba (March 1, 2010)—Five main issues affecting caribou emerged from last week's intensive and productive Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) Caribou Workshop in Saskatoon, where more than 75 elders, hunters and others from Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories (NWT), Manitoba, Nunavut, Alberta, Yukon, B.C. and Ontario shared invaluable knowledge about Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou. The workshop ran from February 23 to 25.

The BQCMB organized the workshop in an effort to find ways to reverse the serious population decline of the Beverly barren-ground caribou herd, and to try to prevent the neighbouring Qamanirjuaq herd from suffering a similar decrease in size. Current data show that, globally, most caribou herds are decreasing.

"The Board wants to thank each and every one of you," BQCMB chairman Albert Thorassie told workshop participants who had so generously shared their knowledge in a spirit of co-operation and respect during the workshop. "This is just the first step," he added. "We have to bring our knowledge back" to communities and make sure that knowledge is passed on to young people.

Workshop participants identified climate change, disturbance from human land use activities, loss of habitat due to forest fires on the winter range, harvesting, and predators (especially on the calving grounds) as being among the main issues affecting caribou today.

The next step for the BQCMB is to visit caribou-range communities to talk with residents about these issues. This will allow many more people who rely on the herds to share their knowledge about caribou and provide their comments and suggestions on ways to help Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou.

The BQCMB will distribute a plain language summary within the month, a more detailed plain language report on the workshop this summer, and another report once community meetings have been completed – hopefully by the fall of 2011.

The BQCMB advises governments (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, NWT, Nunavut and Canada) and communities on conservation and management of two barren-

ground caribou populations, the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq herds. The Beverly herd's range has historically extended from northern Saskatchewan through NWT to the Kivalliq region of Nunavut, while the Qamanirjuaq herd ranges primarily from northern Manitoba into the southern Kivalliq.

The NWT government has conducted reconnaissance surveys on the Beverly calving ground for the past three years, finding fewer and fewer animals. In June 2009, less than 100 adult caribou were counted on the calving ground during the peak of the calving period, compared to 5,737 animals counted using comparable methods in 1994.

Reconnaissance surveys are not population surveys – they only provide a snapshot of some of the animals on the calving ground during the June calving period – so the current size of the Beverly herd is not known. In 1994, when surveys required to calculate a population estimate were last done, the herd numbered around 276,000.

These recent calving ground surveys suggest that the Beverly herd has suffered a major population decline. The causes are likely a mix of natural and human-caused factors. These include the natural caribou population cycle, diseases, changes in habitat (including winter range lost to forest fires), parasites, and predation. Limited satellite-collar data indicate that some cows that had previously calved on the Beverly calving ground have shifted to the Ahiak calving ground in recent years. The Beverly herd may also have been affected by human-caused activities, including climate change, mineral exploration and development, and hunter harvest.

The BQCMB urges everyone – governments, companies and individuals alike – to do everything possible to take pressure off the Beverly herd right away. The herd will need the most favourable conditions over many years for its numbers to increase again.

Communities in northern Saskatchewan especially have depended on hunting Beverly caribou to feed their families. The herd has also been hunted by residents of Lutselk'e, Fort Smith and Fort Resolution in NWT, and Baker Lake in Nunavut.

At Board meetings in 2009, the BQCMB identified five priorities for action to help the Beverly herd:

- 1) Governments and others should protect areas that are very important to caribou, starting with the calving grounds.
- 2) Governments and regulatory agencies should do more to help protect caribou from disturbance and habitat loss resulting from mineral exploration and

development, which have been increasing for years across the Beverly caribou range.

3) Hunters should help by taking only what they need.

4) Hunters should help by preventing wastage.

5) Hunters should help by harvesting bulls instead of cows whenever possible.

The BQCMB thanks the sponsors without whose financial support the BQCMB Caribou Workshop would not have been possible: the NWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Nunavut's Department of Environment, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment, the NWT and Nunavut regional offices of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Manitoba Conservation, the Prince Albert Grand Council, the Athabasca Land Use Office, the Athabasca Denesuline Negotiation Team, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, WWF-Canada, AREVA Resources Canada Inc., and Cameco Corp.

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