

## What about other factors affecting caribou?

There are multiple pressures affecting caribou populations, some of which we have little control over – including weather, disease and food availability. The Bathurst and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds have declined significantly in recent years, despite sustained efforts to reduce harvest pressure and manage disturbance to caribou.

While habitat disturbance from development is a major cause of decline in many southern caribou populations, the ranges of most barren-ground caribou in the NWT have little to no human-caused disturbance. Still, the same downward trends or low population levels are being seen across the north.

### Harvest

Harvest restrictions on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds are set by Renewable Resources Boards.

#### Total Allowable Harvest (TAH):

- Bathurst = 0 (since 2015)
- Bluenose-East = 193 bulls

These restrictions are supported by our co-management partners and communities, even though they have resulted in hardships.

### Disturbance

Human-caused disturbance to barren-ground caribou is important to the GNWT and our co-management partners, and we are committed to minimizing the effects of development and managing cumulative impacts. Land use plans and range plans, such as the *Bathurst Caribou Range Plan*, help regulators minimize disturbance to caribou as part of the NWT's robust environmental assessment process.

### Habitat conservation

Habitat conservation is one of the approaches identified in the *Bathurst Caribou Range Plan, Taking Care of Caribou* (management plan for the Bluenose-East, Bluenose-West and Cape Bathurst herds) and the *Recovery Strategy for Barren-ground Caribou in the Northwest Territories*, which were collaboratively developed with Indigenous co-management partners. Work is currently underway to identify key caribou winter ranges that can be considered in decisions about fire suppression, as well as important areas related to maintaining migration routes such as key water crossings and land corridors with developers and regulators. The GNWT also works closely with developers to support best practices to reduce impacts on caribou.



## When will we know if these actions are helping?

Overall success of wolf management actions will take time to determine. Information collected from harvesters and satellite collars, along with scientific analysis, will help us learn more about wolves and assess the effectiveness of our management actions over the next five years.

All wolf management actions will be carefully reviewed every year to determine whether they should continue or if we need to adapt our approach.



# Wolf (dìga) management

## Supporting barren-ground caribou recovery

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and Tłıchǫ Government are working closely with our co-management partners in both the NWT and Nunavut to take coordinated and comprehensive action to support barren-ground caribou (ekwò) recovery.

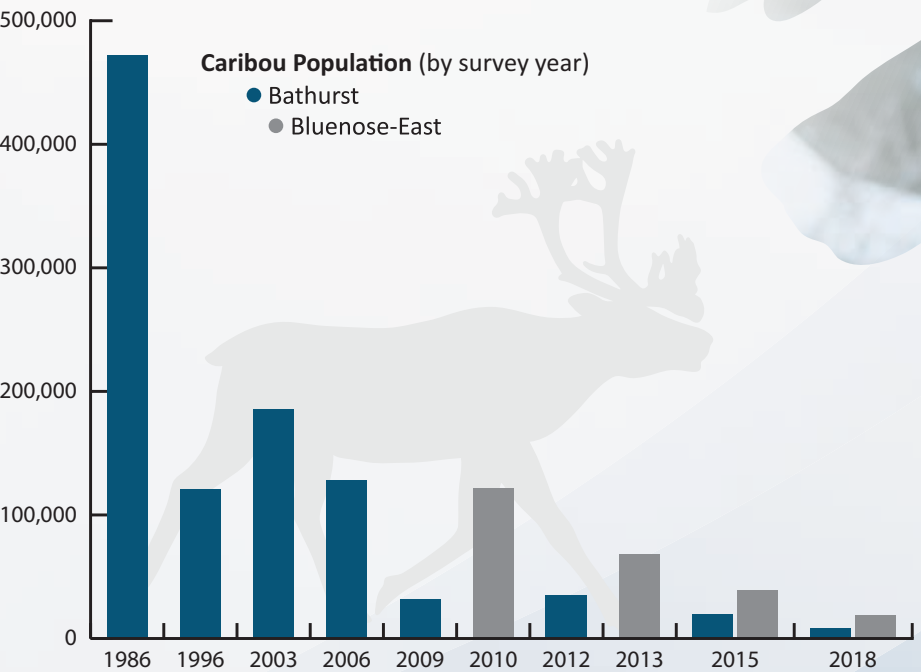
The Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds in particular have experienced a significant decline over the last few years and there is an immediate need for additional action to support these herds. Reducing wolf (dìga) predation, together with ongoing caribou harvest restrictions and other management actions, can help increase caribou survival and give these herds a better chance to recover.

## How can reducing wolf (dìga) populations help caribou?

Wolf (dìga) management is one of many actions being taken by the GNWT and our co-management partners to help support our declining caribou herds.

When caribou populations are at extremely low levels, reducing numbers of predators can help increase caribou survival rates and support population recovery. Wolves are the main predator of barren-ground caribou. On average, a single wolf can eat 23-29 caribou per year.

Given the current low numbers of Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou, predation is considered to be an important contributor to caribou mortality for these herds.





## Our approach

The joint GNWT and Tłı̨chǫ Government approach to wolf (dìga) management focuses on reducing the number of wolves on the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou winter ranges over five years through enhanced support for harvesters and our traditional economy.

Our approach is based on the best available scientific, local and traditional knowledge and builds on lessons learned from other jurisdictions and through our own experience.

### Enhanced support for wolf (dìga) harvesters and the traditional economy

Wolf (dìga) harvesters are an important part of the traditional economy in the NWT. To ensure harvesters in the North Slave region have the best chance to successfully harvest wolves and produce quality furs, the Tłı̨chǫ Government and the GNWT are offering enhanced training and support.

#### Key actions:

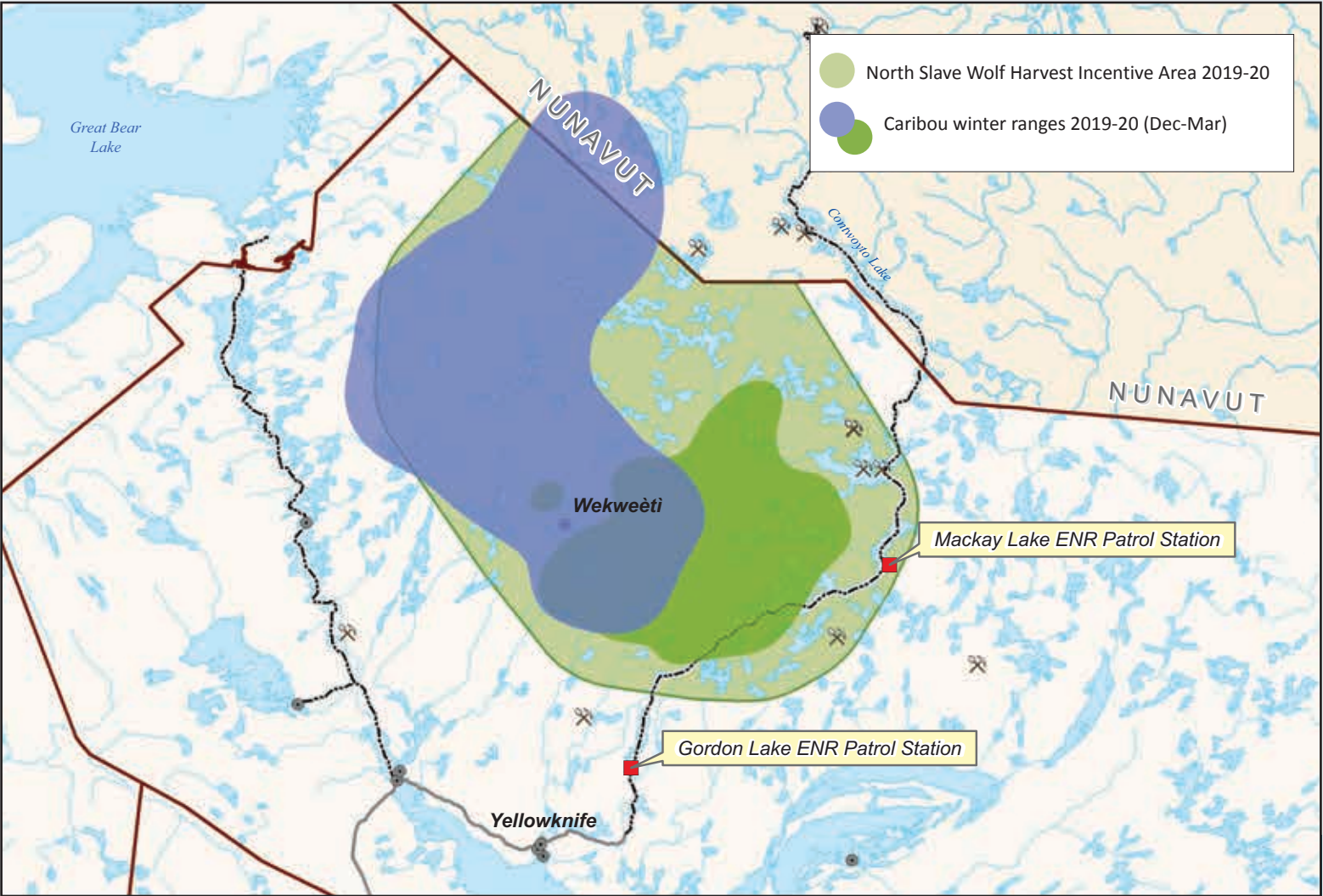
- Increased payments under the **Enhanced North Slave Wolf Harvest Incentive Program**
- No fees for wolf tags
- New incentives for Nunavut hunters harvesting in their traditional harvesting area in the NWT
- Tłı̨chǫ Government’s Community-based Dìga Harvest Training Program
- GNWT workshops on best practices for wolf harvesting and pelt preparation

### Wolf (dìga) reduction

While our focus is on supporting harvesters to achieve the wolf (dìga) removal levels necessary to support caribou recovery, aerial removal may be required if wolf removal targets are not met by harvesters.

#### Key actions:

- If annual wolf removal targets have not been met by the end of March, aerial removal will be considered. By waiting until later in the season, we give our harvesters the best chance to make an impact on wolf populations.
- Every effort will be made to recover wolf carcasses for skinning and analysis.



### Monitoring, research and assessment

Learning about wolf (dìga) movements, their diet and how they interact with caribou will help us understand the impact our actions are having on wolves and caribou recovery. The GNWT and Tłı̨chǫ Government will continue to work closely with experts in caribou and wolf dynamics to refine approaches to research, monitoring and assessment.

#### Key actions:

- Collecting information from wolf harvesters
- Monitoring catch per unit effort
- Estimating wolf removal levels on caribou winter range
- Monitoring wolf condition, diet and animal welfare
- Monitoring wolf movements
- Monitoring changes in caribou herd demographic rates

### Adaptive management

To give caribou the best chance at recovery, we must adapt our approach to reflect the latest scientific, local and traditional knowledge.

The GNWT and Tłı̨chǫ Government will conduct a full program review every year to assess the effectiveness of wolf management actions and determine, with the Wek’èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB), whether wolf reductions should continue and/or if changes should be made.

## How many wolves need to be removed to give caribou the best chance to recover?

Experience elsewhere shows sustained removal is necessary to support an increase in caribou survival rates, as wolf populations can rebound quickly once management actions are no longer applied. Our program follows the recommended target of 60% to 80% removal for each of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds over a period of five years.

Targets for wolf removal are reviewed every year based on the best available scientific, local and traditional knowledge, and may be revised as new information becomes available. There is currently limited available information about wolf populations in the NWT, and part of the goal of our wolf management program is to improve our understanding of wolves and wolf-caribou interactions.

#### What happens to the pelts?

All wolves (dìga) are removed during the trapping season when furs are at their best quality. Wolves removed from the winter ranges of Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou are stored and transported to Yellowknife for examination and pelt preparation. Indigenous harvesters prepare the wolf pelts as part of the traditional economy.

