

**YUKON FISH AND WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT BOARD**



January 9, 2020

Chief Roberta Joseph
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government
PO Box 599
Dawson City, Yukon
Y0B 1G0

Dear Chief Joseph,

Re: Board Recommendation to Open Fortymile Caribou Herd Licensed Hunt

The Board would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge, and thank, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation for their key role in the recovery of the Fortymile Caribou Herd. The Board understands that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has sacrificed a great deal, voluntarily forgoing harvest opportunities for over two decades. The Board would also like to acknowledge the timeless relationship your Nation shares with this herd, and the interdependent relationship between the herd's health and that of the Hän people.

The recovery of the Fortymile Caribou Herd is indeed a success story we can all be proud of. It signals 25 years of conservation efforts led by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, Dawson District Renewable Resources Council, Yukon Government, Fish and Wildlife Management Board, as well as our partners in the State of Alaska. The Board hopes to see this collaborative process continue for many more years to come.

We are writing this letter to explain the Board's rationale for supporting this hunt, given the existing restrictions, at this time. The Board sincerely hopes that with some clarification, we can maintain a strong relationship, continuing an open and positive discussion about continuing the successful management of the Fortymile herd.

Since 2013, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon Government have been working in a collaborative process towards developing a Harvest Management Plan for Fortymile caribou in Yukon. We also understand the concerns Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has expressed over initiating a licensed harvest on the herd in January 2020.

The Board understands the provisions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement, which states that when dealing with matters of fish and wildlife, priority is given to subsistence harvesters before any licensed harvest opportunity is allowed. There can be no major issues or conflicts between licensed and subsistence harvesters in terms of access or opportunity. We recommended opening this hunt contingent on it taking a carefully structured and measured approach. From the Board's perspective, we agree the current restrictions implemented by the Yukon government for this hunt are sufficient to open the herd to a relatively small opportunity for licensed harvest, and will also ensure First Nation harvesting rights, or access to these rights, are not hindered or obstructed.

After a fulsome discussion, the Board unanimously decided to support a winter hunt based on all the factors listed above, along with the best information currently available on the herd's health. This information clearly indicates the poor body condition of bull caribou in mid or late summer, females struggling to maintain body weight post calving, a reduction in the number of three-year-old cows giving birth, and a concerning mortality rates of calves.

This evidence, along with concerns over the growth rate of the herd, compounded by the limited calving grounds currently being utilized, seems sufficient to encourage hunting as a means to moderate the growth rate of the herd. The data that has been presented to the Board points to a potential population collapse and identifies a need for Yukoners to do their part in harvesting our share of caribou to moderate the herd's growth.

It is our hope that this herd will continue to grow steadily, and in doing so, continue to reoccupy its historic range in Yukon. We firmly believe this is in the best interest of all parties and is a plausible outcome, considering the current population level and opportunities for harvest.

The Board is confident that given the herd's current size, harvesting 225 caribou through a permitted winter hunt will not negative impact the herd's overall health. We respect the evidence being put forth and believe that Yukoners can harvest a modest number of Fortymile caribou at this time. This will facilitate a more controlled growth trend of the herd, ensuring a sustainable population. The Board believes this controlled growth will best support the needs of subsistence harvesters, and licensed harvesters — but is primarily done in the interest of the Fortymile caribou and future generations of Yukoners.

Thank you for your time and for considering the Board's rationale behind recommending this hunting opportunity be reopened. We look forward to continuing to work together on this matter in the future.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact the Board's Executive Director, Graham Van Tighem. executivedirector@yfwmb.ca (867)-667-5835

Sincerely,



John Burdek, Chair

CC: All Yukon Renewable Resources Councils

CC: Karen Clyde, Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Branch, Department of Environment

CC: Yukon News, Whitehorse Star, CBC North