
An open letter to the Post-Election Yukon Premier and Minister of Environment:

The undersigned parties to this letter are major stakeholders in Yukon's wildlife. Recent decisions and proposals have led us to believe that wildlife in Yukon is neither being managed in the best interest of harvesters and non-consumptive users, nor in keeping with formal wildlife management agreements including the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) and therefore every First Nations Final Agreement (FNFA) and their associated wildlife management governance processes. As such, this letter is a clarion call for Yukon Government (YG) and Department of Environment to adopt a revised, long-term conservation philosophy that supports the UFA and FNFA's with appropriate legislation, regulation, and program funding to ensure ABUNDANT moose, caribou, and sheep Territory wide.

Chapter 1 of the UFA sets out two important definitions with regard to wildlife management in Yukon. The first is Conservation, which means "the management of fish and wildlife...to ensure the quality, diversity and Long-Term Optimum Productivity of fish and wildlife populations, with the primary goal of ensuring a sustainable harvest and its proper utilization." The second is Long-Term Optimum Productivity, which means "the productivity required to ensure the long-term continuation of a species or population while providing for the needs of Yukon [First Nations] and other harvesters and non-consumptive users of fish and wildlife in the short term."

YG's approach to "ensuring a sustainable harvest" is to continually decrease harvest opportunity while neglecting to actively manage wildlife populations and the productivity side of the sustainable harvest equation. We assert the definitions of Conservation and Long-Term Optimum Productivity create a MANDATE for YG to manage wildlife differently than it has in the past based on the UFA's intent to provide harvest opportunity as a required outcome of wildlife management in Yukon. More specifically, this renewed management approach is intended to augment the current moose, caribou, and sheep populations throughout the territory to a level closer to the carrying capacity of the land they inhabit. This new vision of sustainable harvest opportunity aligns with the expectations of First Nations, licensed hunters, conservation organizations, and nearly all Yukoners. This vision extends beyond our borders to people from around the globe who visit Yukon for a "Larger than Life" experience with wilderness and wildlife viewing as essential components. In short, moose,

caribou, and sheep provide an important traditional food source, consumptive and non-consumptive recreation, and economic benefit for a tremendous number of stakeholders. As such, abundance must be the lens through which wildlife management decisions are viewed. We believe achieving the objective of abundant moose, caribou, and sheep will require YG to develop and implement a comprehensive management program covering critical factors in habitat enhancement, access management, stakeholder consultation/education, and wildlife population management (versus population monitoring only).

In this context, the following recent wildlife management actions support our assertion that harvest opportunity is being reduced with no clear plan to change the long-term trajectory of moose, caribou, and sheep populations:

Finlayson Caribou—Resident licensed hunting was terminated on the eve of the 2018 season opening and outfitting quota was removed the following season. This decision on a stable population of ~2700 animals, which saw long-term average licensed harvest of just eight bulls annually, demonstrates YG's capacity to discount scientific input, while delivering no clear plan to address a perceived conservation concern with respect to this caribou herd.

South Canol Moose—In early 2021, the Minister decided to set aside overwhelming public feedback and Fish & Wildlife Management Board recommendations and place this popular, accessible area to hunt moose on permit. This action was taken citing conservation concern mostly driven by unsupported estimates of mortality other than regulated hunting and was also done without the benefit of recent survey data. This decision will push a significant number of serious moose hunters as well as hundreds of individuals and families who enjoy the outdoors while hunting moose casually to other accessible areas and traditional territories, thereby increasing harvest pressure, competition, and conflict in those areas.

Other Recent Management Actions—Hart River Caribou Permit Hunt, Sifton-Miners Moose Permit Hunt, and various proposed threshold hunts, are part of a seemingly growing list of examples where harvest opportunity is being removed without mechanisms to enhance the population, contrary to the requirement to manage these moose and caribou herds for Long-Term Optimum Productivity. Suffice it to say, any current or future proposed regulations, which limit harvest of ungulates without a commensurate set of proposals designed to improve the

species population is a failure to uphold the UFA and protect the public interest.

Finally, the UFA also sets out two important wildlife governance structures consisting of regional oversight from Renewable Resource Councils (RRC's) and territory-wide oversight from Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board (YFWMB), which was established as the "primary instrument of fish and wildlife management." These groups are the all-important interface between YG and wildlife stakeholders and function as the voice of the Yukon people. While we understand and recognize that recommendations from the RRC's and YFWMB are ultimately decided by the Minister of Environment, we assert that these groups are not being effectively consulted and informed and are frequently marginalized in their mandate and we fear the voice of the Yukon people is being unduly muted. As such, we write this letter to begin the process of regaining our voice in wildlife management. United, we invite all wildlife stakeholders to join us in this call to the next Yukon Premier and Minister of Environment. United, we call for ABUNDANT moose, caribou, and sheep and all the important benefits they provide to Yukoners!

Initial Signatories,
Yukon Fish & Game Association
Yukon Outfitters Association
Yukon Wild Sheep Foundation

Individuals and organizations can send questions, comments, or requests to become a signatory to:

wildlifeyukon@gmail.com

