



ʔehdzo Got'ɪnɛ Gots'ɛ Nákedı

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April 8, 2021

RE: Proposed Sahtú Land Use Plan Amendment Application, April 9, 2021-04-07

Dear Heather:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed amendment to the Sahtú Land Use Plan.

The ʔehdzo Got'ɪnɛ Gots'ɛ Nákedı (Sahtú Renewable Resources Board - SRRB) would like to firstly celebrate the establishment of Ts'udé Nɪɪné Tuyeta Protected Area. This is an important accomplishment and the added protection for wildlife and habitat in the area is significant.

The Sahtú Land Use Planning Board has proposed that areas previously protected under Zone 65 Ts'udé Nɪɪné Tuyeta Proposed Conservation Initiative and excluded from the establishment area of the Ts'udé Nɪɪné Tuyeta Protected Area be zoned as Special Management or General Use. As indicated in the Background Report, some of those excluded areas are important habitat for beaver, Dall's sheep, migratory birds, moose, and caribou.¹ The amendment application states that the proposed zoning is aligned with the Ts'udé Nɪɪné Tuyeta Working Group (TTWG) decisions and adjacent zoning.

Ducks Unlimited provided a comment in response to release of the Background Report recommending that all of "the PCI be zoned as a conservation zone due to recent wetland data

¹ p.18-20 of SLUP Background Report: Amending the SLUP's Zone 65 PCI (Proposed Conservation Initiative) Following the Creation of Ts'udé Nɪɪné Tuyeta Protected Area,
https://sahtulanduseplan.org/sites/default/files/final_background_report_tsude_niline_tuyeta.pdf

information specifies high waterfowl habitat nesting areas, high vegetation volume and the need to protect migration habitat and endorse climate change mitigation measures.”²

The SRRB is in agreement with Ducks Unlimited with respect to the ecological importance of this landscape as a whole, including the areas excluded from Ts’udé Nǫlǫné Tuyeta Protected Area (“excluded areas”). The SRRB would add that generally speaking, increasing land protection is an important step in protecting ǰasǫǫ godí hé Dene ts’ǫǫ hé (all living things and Dene ways of being or biocultural values), especially given the uncertainties from climate change and the need to protect critical waterfowl areas.

Of special concern to the SRRB at this time are conservation values with respect to caribou in the excluded areas.

SLUPB Map 4 in the amendment application identifies current knowledge with respect to ǰadǎ (barren-ground caribou), ǰǫdzǫ (woodland caribou) and shíhta goǰadǎ (mountain caribou) range. The map indicates that the excluded areas encompass ǰǫdzǫ range, as well as range of the Fort Good Hope and Redstone shíhta goǰadǎ.

SLUPB Map 4 does not indicate barren-ground caribou presence. However, this area is encompassed by a barren-ground caribou hunting area. This area is currently in the NWT Big Game Hunting Regulations as S/BC/02 (Sahtú Barren-Ground Caribou Hunting Area), and the SRRB has recommended that it be renamed Tuyeta ǰadǎ Nǫné [Caribou Land].³ This recommendation was accepted by the Minister on January 29, 2021.⁴ This is notwithstanding modifications to barren-ground caribou hunting area boundaries recommended by the SRRB in the 2008 Report and Reasons for Decision on the Bluenose West Hearing in Fort Good Hope “to reflect herd specific management,”⁵ followed by the Minister’s proposed rezoning to exclude the area encompassing S/BC/02⁶ - though this did not lead to a change in the regulations.

The SRRB’s 2020 recommendation to maintain Tuyeta ǰadǎ Nǫné [Caribou Land] or S/BC/02 is based on evidence provided at the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session that ǰadǎ have crossed Dǎhogǎ (Mackenzie River) and are likely to be found within Tuyeta ǰadǎ Nǫné.

² As noted in Ducks Unlimited comment submitted in response to the SLUPB’s Background Report, https://sahtulanduseplan.org/sites/default/files/letter_to_slupb_zone_65_october_2020.pdf

³ Recommendation 7.2. SRRB, *Sahtú Ragóǰa (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting: Colville 2020 Public Listening (Hearing) Session Report and Reasons for Decision* (www.srrb.nt.ca: SRRB, 2020).

⁴ GNWT Minister Shane Thompson, *Responses to Sahtú Ragóǰa (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting: Report on the Colville 2020 Public Listening (Hearing) Session* (www.srrb.nt.ca: SRRB, 2021).

⁵ Recommendation 6. SRRB, *Report on a Public Hearing Held by the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board & Reasons for Decision on the Setting of a Total Allowable Harvest for the Bluenose - West Caribou Herd* (www.srrb.nt.ca: SRRB, 2008). 22.

⁶ Item 10 and map. GNWT, *SRRB Public Hearing Report- Bluenose-West Caribou Herd* (www.srrb.nt.ca: SRRB, 2008). 3, 5.

I'm going to say really quickly what Edward told us in Fort Good Hope almost ten years ago at a caribou meeting in Colville Lake. This is what he said: "My dad told me that caribou were going to cross the Mackenzie River and after that they were going to disappear. Thank you; that's it. That's what he said in Fort Good Hope ten years ago, and they did, they crossed the river and they disappeared, so TK says a lot."⁷

Ṯdzı and ʔədə are both listed as líla horéno xai egúhyá behúle rágudı (might disappear within a hundred years – Threatened designation) under the NWT Species At Risk Act (SARA). Ṯdzı is also designated as such under the Federal SARA, and ʔədə are being considered for the same designation based on an assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Shíhta goʔədə have been designated bek'e k'ínaʔədıts'ewe gha got'odéʔa (we need to keep an eye on it, Special Concern designation) under the Federal SARA, and the Minister is considering the same designation under the NWT SARA.

The Ts'udé Nı́łné Tuyeta Protected Area and the contiguous excluded areas is very special as an integrated landscape where all three caribou ecotypes may live and interact. Some Indigenous knowledge and science has been documented about these populations, but this is by no means comprehensive. Not enough work has been done to understand the possible impacts of habitat fragmentation and/or disturbance on caribou populations in the excluded areas.

In the Colville 2020 Public Listening Session Report and Reasons for Decision, the SRRB recommended that "Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake Renewable Resources Councils, SRRB, NWT Environment and Natural Resources, and Environment and Climate Change Canada collaboratively develop a work plan to address knowledge gaps regarding Sahtú Barren-ground Caribou Area 02 (S/BC/02) (to be renamed the Tuyeta ʔədə Néné [Caribou Land]) through non-invasive Indigenous knowledge and science"⁸ This recommendation was accepted by the Minister in his January 29, 2020 response.⁹

The SRRB also made a recommendation regarding development of a community conservation plan for caribou in S/BC/02, to be renamed be renamed Tuyeta ʔədə Néné [Caribou Land]).¹⁰ In the March 30, 2021 report following the Minister's response,¹¹ the SRRB revised this recommendation as follows: "It is recommended that the Ts'udé Nı́łné Tuyeta Management Board take part in meetings on the development of a community conservation plan for caribou in Sahtú Barren-ground Caribou Area 02 (S/BC/02) (to be renamed the Tuyeta ʔədə Néné

⁷ Roger Odgaard, cited in *supra* note 3 at 63:215.

⁸ Recommendation 7.4, in *supra* note 3 at 64-65:221-222.

⁹ *Supra* note 4 at 16-17.

¹⁰ Recommendation 7.5, in *supra* note 3 at 65:223-224.

¹¹ *Supra* note 4 at 17.

[Caribou Land])”¹² The Minister is scheduled to respond to this recommendation by the end of April, 2021 per the decision framework laid out in the SDMCLCA.

The SRRB decided to undertake a five part Public Listening Session (PLS) approach to addressing a series of “hot topics” in caribou conservation affecting the three kinds of caribou in the Sahtú region. The PLS each have a thematic focus on:

- Harvest regulation
- Predators and Competitors;
- Knowledge about Caribou and Landscapes;
- Wildfires and Climate Change; and
- Economy and Caribou Conservation.

It is expected that these topics will be relevant to discussions about caribou conservation in the excluded areas and Ts’udé Njłjné Tuyeta Protected Area, and looks forward to further dialogue about caribou knowledge and conservation in these areas.

In its capacity as the main instrument of wildlife management in the Sahtú Region, the SRRB would like to recommend that the Protected Area research and monitoring plan encompass these excluded areas so as to learn from any impacts on wildlife – especially caribou – and habitat that might affect wildlife within the Ts’udé Njłjné Tuyeta Protected Area. This work will serve as a basis for assessing any zoning changes that might need to be made through future plan reviews. The SRRB looks forward to working together with the parties on these endeavours.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the points raised in this submission.



Máhsı cho,
Deborah Simmons
Executive Director

¹² Recommendation 7.5, in SRRB, *Sahtú Ragóga (Hunting Law) and Approaches to Wildlife Harvesting: Colville 2020 Public Listening (Hearing) Session Second Report* (www.srrb.nt.ca: SRRB, 2021). 37-38.