

Re: Paramount Resources Ltd. Land Use Permit Application MV2005B0021

IR Number: IR0506-007-7

Source: MVEIRB

To: Government of Northwest Territories

Scoping Hearing Report: Page 18.

Preamble

During the Community Scoping Hearing, the GNWT indicated that it would be able to comment upon the potential impacts of the SDL8 seismic program on the sustainability of forestry operations in the area of the SDL8 program on the condition that the GNWT received Paramount's endpoints for its line clearing activities. The Review Board understands that the endpoints have been provided to the GNWT by Paramount.

Request

1) *Based upon the end point data, Paramount's commitments to use avoidance cutting and meandering techniques, as well as the fact that 4 of its 7 proposed cutlines will be located in regrowth areas, can the GNWT indicate whether Paramount's proposed SDL8 program will, in your view, significantly impact on the sustainability of forestry operations (potential or existing) in the area?*

Background

The managed forest area of the Cameron Hills, where SDL8 is located, falls inside the D/7sb forest management unit. In 1999, Forest Management Division formulated a timber supply analysis (TSA) for the area to calculate sustainable harvest level.

A TSA is a model of a forest. It takes into account the forest composition, age, and other attributes to model the forest yield. All areas of a forest unit are inventoried, classified, and fed into the model. The model calculates the average growth for different stand types across the forest management area. Estimates of how much the forest produces, and how much can be sustainably harvested are drawn from the TSA.

In 2001, the sustainable harvest level for the Cameron Hills timber supply area was adjusted based on Deh Cho First Nations Interim Measures Agreement (DCFN IMA) land withdrawals. The northern section was removed from the total land base that timber sustainability calculations were performed on to maintain consistency with surface withdrawals in the DCFN IMA. The recalculated sustainable harvest figures only pertain to the southern section of the timber supply area in D/7sb, outside of the IMA area. The forest management unit D/7sb with the Cameron Hills timber supply area is shown in the attached PDF file.

The sustainable **conifer** harvest level from the timber supply area is approximately 5,000 m³. There is currently one forest harvester actively operating in the D/7sb area. They hold a five-year licence for 20,000 m³ of **conifer** volume, based on a 4,000 m³/year extraction. This volume is dependent on many variables and, consequently, needs to be revisited at five-year intervals.

SDL8 Application

Forest Management analyzed the SDL8 project to determine how much timber will be affected by cutline clearing. The proposed seismic lines that fall on existing lines were not included in the volume calculations. The existing lines were cut in the early 1980's, and are now about 25 years old. Regeneration of the forest on those lines contributes to the net area of the commercial forest, but has no appreciable volume.

Paramount has proposed a 6 m wide cutline width, which will affect approximately 944 m³ of conifer volume, and 957 m³ of deciduous volume (Table 1).

Between the current forest management licence and the proposed seismic cutline disturbance the combined forest disturbance will not exceed the sustainable harvest level of 5,000 m³ for the Cameron Hills timber supply area of the D/7sb forest management unit.

However, the Paramount SDL8 project will cut approximately 24% of the current harvest allocation for the Cameron Hills forest management area of the D/7sb forest Management unit. Combined with the forest harvest from the area the volume removed the forest harvested from the unit will exceed the timber harvest ceiling of 4,000 m³.

2 a) If you responded (above) that a significant impact is to be expected due to the SDL8 program, can the GNWT comment on the likely magnitude and duration of the impact?

For a one year, one time impact the SDL8 disturbance is within the sustainable yield of the forest. Future developments of SDL8 that require more, and possible permanent forest clearing will require more intensive management to maintain the forest yield.

2 b) Is the GNWT aware of any methods that could mitigate the impacts and if so, could these be described in detail?

Reduction of line width is the simplest means of reducing impacts. For comparison, values for 5 m, 4.5 m and 3.5 m wide lines were also modeled and are provided in Table 1. Hand cut lines, typically 1.5 m in width are considered to have no impact. These widths also have the advantage of minimal impact on boreal woodland caribou habitat [see response to IR0506-007-8]

Table 1. Estimated Timber Volume Removed by the Proposed Paramount 2D Seismic Project By Line Width Options.

Line Width	Conifer Volume Removed (m ³)	Deciduous Volume Removed (m ³)	Total Volume Removed (m ³)
6 m	944	957	1901
5 m	797	804	1601
4.5 m	715	719	1434
3.5 m	564	576	1140

Other options include means of enhancing forest regrowth, particularly focused on conifer regrowth, on disturbances by the harvesting company and/or Paramount.

Preamble

Concerns were noted in the Hay River Community Scoping Hearing about the potential project specific and cumulative impacts of the SDL8 seismic exploration program on boreal caribou. As the GNWT shares regulatory responsibilities for upholding the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), the Review Board looks to the GNWT as an expert advisor in helping to assess the potential significance of the SDL8 program on boreal caribou, a SARA-listed species.

Request

1) How important is the development area to boreal caribou?

The GNWT has limited information on boreal caribou use in the proposed development area. Boreal caribou females have been collared to the direct north and south of the proposed development area. GNWT staff have seen boreal caribou tracks in the development area and the proponent reports that boreal caribou were sighted during July field surveys.¹ As the vegetation and landscape of the proposed development area is continuous with areas to the north and south, it is expected that boreal caribou use the proposed development area.

Collared caribou to the north and south of the proposed development area show great variation in annual home range size (33 – 7,897 km², 100% minimum convex polygon);² therefore, there is the likelihood that some caribou could spend a significant portion of the year in the proposed development area.

The proposed development area represents a narrowing of the lowland vegetation west of the Hay River to the east slopes of the Cameron Hills. This thin area of lowland vegetation may be important for north and south movement of boreal caribou in the area.

In summary, in the absence of data, it is reasonable to assume that boreal caribou are found in the proposed development area based on the distribution of collared animals. Similar vegetation and landscape types to the north and south, and anecdotal information indicate that it is also reasonable to assume that this area may represent an important travel corridor for boreal caribou.

2) Is enough known about the response of boreal caribou to industrial activities to assure the GNWT that this development will not, directly or indirectly, affect the boreal caribou use of the area?

From past and current studies on boreal caribou across Canada, it has been well documented that industrial activities directly and indirectly affect boreal caribou use of an area. The strongest research finding for boreal caribou is the increased risk of predation on boreal caribou when their habitat and vegetation adjacent to boreal caribou habitat is changed through human activities

¹ Paramount Resources Ltd. Significant Discovery Licence 8– 2D Geophysical Program August 2005, p. 6.

² Deborah Johnson, unpublished data, May 2006.

such as oil and gas development or forestry. Landscape alteration (the combined effects of habitat degradation and fragmentation) may increase predation in three ways. First, creation of early successional vegetation types (e.g., through linear feature development, forest harvesting, wildfire) can increase predator abundance by supporting greater numbers and/or a wider distribution of other prey species such as moose and deer.³ Second, landscape alteration may theoretically force caribou to concentrate in remaining suitable habitat, reducing their ability to maintain low densities and hence avoid predation.⁴ Third, linear developments may facilitate the travel and hence hunting efficiency of wolves.⁵ These linear corridors also provide increased access for legal and illegal hunting.

Boreal caribou tend to avoid industrial infrastructure such as linear corridors, which essentially reduces the effectiveness of habitat adjacent to these developments.⁶ In Alberta, research has shown that cumulative effects of industrial development on boreal caribou range have led to significant range recession and population effects.⁷

In summary, it is fair to assume that this development will have a direct and indirect impact on boreal caribou use in the proposed development area. It is much more difficult to predict the magnitude of the impact without extensive monitoring and a rigorous experimental design.

3) *Is the SDL8 seismic program likely to adversely affect boreal caribou use of the area?*

It is anticipated that the SDL8 seismic program will directly and indirectly impact boreal caribou use of the area. Direct impacts would occur during operation of the seismic program through sensory disturbances that may negatively affect the health, condition and productivity of an individual caribou, possibly increasing their susceptibility to other threats such as predation or

³ Telfer, E.S. 1978. Cervid distribution, browse and snow cover in Alberta. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 42:352-361.

Schwartz, C. and A. Franzmann. 1989. Bears, wolves, moose, and forest succession: some management considerations on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska. *Alces* 25: 1-10.

⁴ Seip, D.R. 1998. Ecosystem management and the conservation of caribou habitat in British Columbia. *Rangifer, Spec. Issue* 10:203-211.

Smith, K.G., E.J. Ficht, D. Hobson, T.C. Sorensen and D. Hervieux. 2000. Winter distribution of woodland caribou in relation to clear-cut logging in west-central Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 78:1433-1440.

McLoughlin, P.D., E. Dzus, B. Wynes, and S. Boutin. 2003. Declines in populations of woodland caribou. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 67:755-761.

Wittmer, H. U., Sinclair, A. R. E., and B. N. McLellan. 2005. The role of predation in the decline and extirpation of woodland caribou. *Oecologia* 144:257-267.

⁵ James, A.R.C. and A.K. Stuart-Smith. 2000. Distribution of caribou and wolves in relation to linear features. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 64:154-159.

⁶ Smith *et al.* 2000. *Ibid.*

Dyer, S.J., J.P. O'Neill, S.M. Wasel and S. Boutin. 2001. Avoidance of industrial development by woodland caribou. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 65:531-542.

Nagy, J., D. Auriat, W. Wright, T. Slack, I. Ellsworth, and M. Kienzler. 2005. Ecology of Boreal Woodland Caribou in the Lower Mackenzie Valley, NT. Work Completed in the Inuvik Region, April 2003 to November 2004. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT. 55 p.

⁷ Schaefer, J.A. 2003. Long-term range recession and the persistence of caribou on the taiga. *Conservation Biology* 17:1435-1439.

McLoughlin *et al.* 2003. *Ibid.*

Smith, K. G. 2004. Woodland caribou demography and persistence relative to landscape change in west-central Alberta. MSc. Thesis. University of Alberta. Edmonton, AB. 112 p.

parasites.⁸ Indirect impacts would occur due to habitat alteration and fragmentation. Nagy *et al* demonstrated that even in areas of low linear corridor density (0.10 – 0.30 km/km²) in the Northwest Territories, boreal caribou avoid these features year round.⁹

4) Is enough known about the response of boreal caribou to industrial activities, and the importance of the area to boreal caribou, to assure the GNWT that the development will not, directly or indirectly, have implications at the population level?

Population structure of boreal caribou in the Northwest Territories is not known. It appears that boreal caribou are mainly contiguous throughout their distribution in the territory; however, a population/metapopulation structure is expected due to the influence of landscape features that may act as barriers such as large rivers or large lakes.

The population structure of boreal caribou surrounding the proposed development area is unknown. Consequently, it is difficult to predict whether the proposed development will directly or indirectly have implications at the population level.

5) Is the SDL8 seismic program on its own likely to adversely affect boreal caribou at the population level?

The SDL8 seismic program will directly and indirectly impact individual boreal caribou in the proposed development area and surrounding area. The population structure of boreal caribou in the Northwest Territories has not been defined and the population rate of increase for boreal caribou in the area is unknown. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the proposed development will adversely affect caribou at the population level.

6) Is the SDL8 seismic program likely to contribute to an adverse cumulative effect on boreal caribou at the population level?

The proposed development will cumulatively add to any past, on-going and future land use activities and wildfire patterns in the area that may have a direct or indirect impact on boreal caribou. Smith demonstrated that a negative correlation exists between industrial activity and adult female survival for boreal caribou.¹⁰ Most jurisdictions recognize that it is the cumulative impact of a variety of land use pressures that are resulting in declining caribou numbers.¹¹

7) If the answer to the previous question (#6 above) is “yes”, please specify what other past, present or reasonably foreseeable future activities also contribute to the cumulative effect.

⁸ Bradshaw, C.J.A., S. Boutin and D.M. Hebert. 1998. Energetic implications of disturbance caused by petroleum exploration to Woodland Caribou. *Canadian Journal of Zoology*. 76: 1319-1324.

⁹ Nagy *et al*. 2005. *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Smith 2004. *Ibid*.

¹¹ Spalding, D. 2000. The early history of woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in British Columbia. BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Wildlife Branch, Victoria BC. *Wildlife Bulletin No. 100*, 61pp.

Manitoba Conservation, May 2000. Woodland Caribou Conservation Strategy for Manitoba. Boreal Caribou Committee. September 2001. Strategic Plan and Industrial Guidelines for Boreal Caribou Ranges in Northern Alberta.

The GNWT cannot respond specifically to this question at this time. However, known past and current activities include:

- Forest harvesting (past and current)
- Railway right-of-way
- Recreational pursuits
- Traditional trapping and hunting

8) *What components, if any, of the SDL8 program are the potential sources of the impacts on boreal caribou?*

- Creation of new cutlines at 6 m wide.
- Disturbance associated with people and equipment on the land during program operations.

9) *If so, what are the characteristics of the impacts?*

The characteristics of the SDL8 program that may potentially impact boreal caribou include (listed in order of importance):

- Increased access to the area for hunting.
- Increase in early successional vegetation types due to removal of older forest types. This potentially leads to an increase in other prey species (such as moose and deer) that in turn leads to an increase in predator numbers (primarily wolves).
- Increased habitat fragmentation and degradation.
- Direct sensory impacts during the operation of the program.
- Direct loss of potential forage species used by caribou year round.

10) *Can the GNWT suggest practices or technologies that can reliably mitigate the predicted impacts to boreal caribou?*

- Use of existing lines.
- Use of low or minimal impact techniques for line clearing including the reduction of line width to 1.5 m wide.
- Line blocking.

11) *To what degree can these mitigations reduce the impacts?*

- The use of existing cutlines would mean no increase in: hunter access into the area; successional vegetation types; habitat fragmentation; or loss of woodland caribou forage.
- The use of low or minimal impact seismic techniques as compared to the proposed 6 m line width would reduce: hunter access; the increase of successional vegetation types; and, habitat fragmentation and loss of forage.
- Line blocking may reduce the ability of wolves to utilize the lines as travel corridors thus reducing predation pressures on caribou.¹²
- Direct sensory impacts during operations cannot be mitigated. Activity during and shortly after the calving period should be avoided.

In addition to specific mitigative measures, the proponent should adopt an adaptive management process to determine the success of mitigative measures. This includes a structured and rigorously defined process to ensure that alternative hypotheses about key management

¹² Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada State of Science on Woodland Caribou Workshop 2005. Online at <http://www.ptac.org/env/dl/envw0503.pdf>

questions are addressed through operational implementation of strategies, monitoring of outcomes, and adjustment of management approaches.¹³

12) *If the GNWT cannot identify specific practices or technologies (#10 above), could it identify thresholds for levels of activities (such as cutline widths, crew sizes, or other activities that are part of the project) where, in the GNWT's expert opinion, no adverse impacts to boreal caribou would be expected?*

Not enough is known about appropriate thresholds of industrial activities to mitigate direct and indirect impacts to boreal caribou with certainty. For example, the threshold level of sensory disturbance before decreases in individual body condition and productivity are experienced is not known. Nor is the threshold amount of linear disturbance that can be tolerated before population demographics are negatively affected. Caution must also be used in establishing thresholds for industrial activities due to probable time lags in response of boreal caribou population demographics to anthropogenic changes. For example, Vors *et al.*¹⁴ found a time lag of 20 years between human landscape disturbance and caribou disappearance in Ontario.

Despite these difficulties, attempts have been made to establish development thresholds for boreal caribou. Development in the project area has exceeded the threshold developed at a Cumulative Effects Workshop in Whitehorse, Yukon¹⁵ that is thought to lead to a decline in caribou populations. It has been reported that caribou populations are thought to not persist when total corridors exceed 3km/km².¹⁶ Thresholds, however, do not incorporate changes or loss of habitat due to natural disturbance regimes such as fire and as such likely overestimate the level of disturbance that can be tolerated.

13) *Can the GNWT provide the Review Board with a summary of how other jurisdictions attempt to mitigate adverse impacts to boreal caribou caused by seismic exploration?*

In a review of web materials and departmental contacts with the National Boreal Caribou Technical Steering Committee the following information on initiatives in the western provinces was gathered:

- Alberta has a strategy document developed by the Boreal Caribou Committee for managing industrial activity in boreal caribou ranges.¹⁷ The overall strategy describes habitat¹⁸ and

¹³ Nyberg, J. B. 1998. Statistics and the practice of adaptive management. Pages 1-7 in V. Sit and B. Taylor, editors. *Statistical methods for adaptive management studies*. British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Research Branch, Victoria, British Columbia, Land Management Handbook 42. Online at <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/pubs/docs/lmh/lmh42.htm>.

¹⁴ Vors, L. S., J. A. Schaeffer and B. A. Pond. 2006. Woodland caribou extirpation and landscape disturbance in Ontario. MSc. Thesis. Trent University. Peterborough, Ontario.

¹⁵ 1.8km/km² as reported in Francis, S., R. Anderson and S. Dyer. 2002. Development of a threshold approach for assessing industrial impacts on woodland caribou in Yukon. Presentation provided at the Assessment and Management of Cumulative Effects Workshop, Whitehorse, Yukon, March 25-26, 2002.

¹⁶ Stelfox, B. pers. comm. as reported in Salmo Consultants *et. al.* 2003. Volume Cumulative Effects Indicators, Thresholds, and Case Studies. Prepared for British Columbia Oil and Gas Commission Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board.

¹⁷ Boreal Caribou Committee. September 2001. Strategic Plan and Industrial Guidelines for Boreal Caribou Ranges in Northern Alberta.

¹⁸ Habitat targets describe the amount of effective habitat that must be present in boreal caribou ranges in order for caribou populations to be stable or increasing.

activity targets¹⁹ and best practices that apply across ranges. It also contains a nested structure of specific Range Plans for each caribou herd in northern Alberta and Caribou Protection Plans for specific development activities that occur within the range. Range Plans specify guidelines to meet the habitat and activity targets and are developed by the Boreal Caribou Committee in conjunction with government and industry. Caribou Protection Plans specify means to protect caribou in accordance with the Range Plan and are submitted by developers wishing to operate within woodland caribou habitat. Caribou Protection Plans provide a detailed description of caribou conservation measures that illustrate the company's commitment to implement best practices. These plans are required by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board for all oil and gas operators in northwest Alberta when operating in caribou range. Guidelines on requirements are contained in Informational Letter IL 94-22.²⁰ Currently, low and minimal impact seismic techniques such as narrow line widths, meandering lines and minimal disturbance of ground cover are implemented by companies as a means to minimize the loss of merchantable timber²¹ and hence the amount of compensation that is paid to forestry companies. In areas outside merchantable timber stands low and minimal impact seismic techniques are typically not used.²²

- The Oil and Gas Commission in British Columbia regulates seismic exploration in the province with a mandate to balance social, environmental and economic interests.²³ The Commission has produced Interim Oil and Gas Industry Guidelines for Boreal Caribou Ranges in Northeastern British Columbia.²⁴ Minimum operating standards apply within identified caribou ranges with enhanced measures applied to identified core habitats. Best practices associated with seismic activity include: minimizing extent and duration of footprint; reduction of line width (<2.5 m) and sight lines through the use of handcut and meandering lines; groundcover protection (mulchers, etc.); use of heli-portable and heli-assist operations; encouraging rapid revegetation and blocking lines to prevent access by both humans and predators.

The Oil and Gas Commission also has guidelines for geophysical operations in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area that ensure that geophysical programs are sensitive to the significant wildlife values in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area. These include line widths to not exceed 2 m in width, reducing line of sight, use of existing lines, reporting on line regrowth and timing restrictions. These techniques are coupled with a commitment to participate in an adaptive management approach to developing innovative alternatives to standard methods.²⁵

- For projects occurring in sensitive areas in Saskatchewan, an Environmental Protection Plan is required which outlines how impacts will be minimized. A joint industry/government committee manages environmental issues associated with the petroleum industry in the

¹⁹ Activity targets identify a maximum amount of disturbance allowed within caribou ranges at a given time.

²⁰ Alberta Energy and Utilities Board. Updated 2006. Online at <http://www.eub.ca/docs/ils/ils/pdf/il94-22.PDF>

²¹ Schneider, R. 2001. The Oil and Gas Industry in Alberta: Practices, Regulations and Environmental Impact, Draft Report. Alberta Centre for Boreal Research. Online at: http://www.saboteursandbigoil.com/Oil&Gas_Industry_AB.pdf

²² Stan Boutin, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, pers. comm., February 2006 at workshop for GNWT Forest Management Division.

²³ Annette Block, Geophysical Programs Manager, Oil and Gas Commission, pers. comm., May 9, 2006.

²⁴ http://www.ogc.gov.bc.ca/documents/scek/Final_Reports/d-ECIM-Com-Axys-2004-19-Rep.pdf

²⁵ BC Oil and Gas Commission Geophysical Guidelines for the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area, May 2004. Available at: <http://www.ogc.gov.bc.ca/documents/guidelines/MKMA%20Geophysical%20Guide%20May%2018%202004.pdf>

province.²⁶ They have developed a number of guideline documents for environmental protection however none are specific to boreal caribou. The Saskatchewan Woodland Caribou Management Team, a multi-stakeholder team, is currently developing a management strategy for boreal caribou that will advise on industrial practices among other aspects.²⁷

- In Manitoba most herds are at risk because of timber harvesting on their range. To alleviate these pressures integrated woodland caribou and forestry management plans are developed and implemented.²⁸ In addition, techniques for seismic activities in defined Sensitive Areas in the province are restricted to low and minimum impact including: the use of existing trails/lines; hand-cut lines; line width not to exceed 1.5m; spacing of recording lines to be 1.6 km minimum; meandering lines; and timing restrictions.²⁹

14) *How successful have these mitigations proven to be in protecting caribou populations and habitat effectiveness?*

Best practices have not been very successful in mitigating the effects of industrial activities across boreal caribou ranges in Alberta. Many herds are declining and the Little Smokey caribou herd is at extreme danger of extinction. A report on the status of boreal caribou in Alberta states that most herds (ranging in size from 40 to 200 animals) are in decline.³⁰ Of the 18 herds in Alberta, 16% are stable, 33% are of unknown status, 33% are in decline and 16% are at immediate risk of extirpation.³¹

In British Columbia, caribou populations are stable in 16%, declining in 11% and extirpated in 31% of their historic range. Demographic trends are unknown over 17% of historical range. Records from 2002 show an accelerating decline for Mountain Caribou and 4 southern herds previously considered stable are now in decline.³² All southeastern herds in BC are either extirpated or in decline.³³

In Manitoba, 30% of herds are of high conservation concern, 50% of moderate concern and 20% of low concern. Population sizes range from 25 to 500.³⁴

²⁶ Terms of Reference at

<http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/environment/assessment/oilandgas/RevisedTOR.pdf>

²⁷ http://www.cpaws-sask.org/boreal_forest/woodland_caribou_recovery_team.html

²⁸ Manitoba Conservation. May 2000. Woodland Caribou Conservation Strategy for Manitoba.

²⁹ Bruce Dunning. Senior Petroleum Inspector, Manitoba Petroleum Branch, Government of Manitoba, email communication, May 2006.

³⁰ Dzuz, E. 2001. Status of Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Alberta. Alberta Environment, Wildlife and Fisheries Management Division, and Alberta Conservation Association. Wildlife Status Report No. 30, Edmonton, AB. 47pp.

³¹ The Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Team. 2005. Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan 2004/5 – 2013/14.

³² <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soerpt/5wildlife/caribou.html>

³³ <http://www.cmiae.org/caribou2002/summaries.htm#Caribou%20Management,%20A%20Precautionary%20Approach>

³⁴ Manitoba's Conservation and Recovery Strategy for Boreal Woodland Caribou. 2005.

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To: Government of Northwest Territories
Scoping Hearing Report: Page 15

Preamble

Measure 12 in the Review Board's *Report of Environmental Assessment for the Cameron Hills Extension Project* (EA03-005) called for the formation of a Dehcho Boreal Caribou Working Group to help development a Boreal Caribou Management Plan for boreal caribou populations in the southern Dehcho. During the Hay River Community Scoping Hearing, the GNWT committed to providing the Review Board with an update on the Working Group and its activities.

Request

1) *Please provide an update regarding the Working Group's current status, including any progress it may have made in regards to development of the Boreal Caribou Management Plan.*

To ensure that the measure directed at the GNWT is carried out, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources captured the following action in the ENR Framework for Action 2005-2008.

Action 3.2.1 In partnership with industry and Deh Cho First Nations, establish the Deh Cho Boreal Caribou Committee to identify management actions to reduce and mitigate impacts on boreal caribou and their habitat from oil and gas development.

The department sent a letter to the Dehcho First Nations in May 2005 to request the nomination of a member to the Working Group. The DFN leadership discussed this matter at their Spring 2005 meeting but felt it would not be appropriate to undertake this work until planning regarding the Dehcho Resource Management Authority had been dealt with during the Dehcho Process negotiations. Regional ENR staff will continue to discuss this matter at community wildlife workshops.

In the meantime, ENR is continuing to undertake actions related to boreal caribou recovery planning. A draft *Boreal Caribou Recovery Strategy* has been completed and implementation is underway. Under the draft *Recovery Strategy*, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is developing an *Action Plan* for the conservation of Boreal caribou in the NWT. The first step in developing an *Action Plan* for conserving boreal caribou is to understand the NWT Boreal caribou population.

Biologists are undertaking community consultations during the winter of 2006. A community consultation document entitled was released in January 2006 [attached]. It is available at <http://www.nwtwildlife.com/pdf/NWTBorealCariboubookletJan2006.pdf>