



News Release



GN Supports HTO Call for Quota to Control Southampton Island Caribou Crisis

CORAL HARBOUR, Nunavut (July 5, 2012) – A new annual harvest limit of 1,000 caribou will come into effect for the Southampton Island caribou population on July 1, 2012.

“We regret having to take such drastic measures as to limit the harvest, however this is the only way that we can quickly and adequately address the problem, in order to safeguard the caribou for future generations,” said the Honourable James Arreak, Minister of Environment.

The initiative is an interim decision under the *Wildlife Act*, under which the Minister of Environment has the authority to take immediate conservation action in unusual or emergency circumstances. The total allowable harvest (TAH) and two associated non-quota limitations are being implemented in response to an urgent request from the Coral Harbour Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO).

“People have been seeing fewer and fewer caribou here in the past few years,” said Noah Kadlak, chair and spokesperson for the Aiviit HTO in Coral Harbour. “On behalf of the community, the HTO board would like to see something done about this before it is too late, and there are no caribou left on the island.”

Ongoing studies have shown that Southampton Island caribou numbers have declined from about 30,000 caribou in 1997 to 7,800 caribou in 2011, representing a drop of almost 75%. Reproductive rates and overall caribou health have plummeted, making recent trends of increased harvest pressure on the population a serious cause for concern. A drastic rise in the export market to other communities is considered to be a contributing factor as well. The Department of Environment (DOE) estimates that caribou on Southampton Island could be wiped out in as little as 3 years if current harvest rates continue.

DOE has been working closely with the Coral Harbour HTO and local harvesters to monitor Southampton Island caribou. In response to community concerns, DOE personnel undertook another aerial survey in early June to get an updated population estimate. Survey results will be released later this month, and will be presented to the HTO and reviewed in order to make longer-term management recommendations for the population.

All 1,000 caribou tags will go to Coral Harbour community members.

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See attached backgrounder/FAQ document.

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