



NWT CIMP Action Plan Survey Report

Five-year reflection and advice for 2026-2030

January 2025



Government of
Northwest Territories

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Summary

The Northwest Territories Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (NWT CIMP) conducted a survey in August and September 2024 to ensure that it continues to align with partner needs and priorities. NWT CIMP's mandate is to understand cumulative impacts and environmental change and to provide useful information for resource management decision-making.

In August 2024, NWT CIMP sent a survey to 147 partners, including Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, government representatives, researchers, and co-management boards. This survey evaluated partner satisfaction with the NWT CIMP's performance during the 2021-2025 period and gathered feedback on goals and priorities for the next five years. In combination with the annual NWT CIMP Results Workshop and Steering Committee guidance, these survey results will help inform NWT CIMP's 2026-2030 Action Plan. Of the 48 respondents, most were researchers or representatives of Government of the Northwest Territories.

Respondents were generally satisfied with NWT CIMP's work over the past five years. 80% were satisfied with NWT CIMP's efforts to understand monitoring priorities and 70% were satisfied with the coordination of monitoring and research. The funding process also received positive feedback for streamlining the proposal process and reporting requirements. Efforts to increase promotion of Traditional Knowledge and reporting directly to communities have been successful, with 80% satisfaction.

Respondents were less satisfied with NWT CIMP's ability to provide information to support decision-making. Respondents highlighted the need for NWT CIMP and regulators to identify information necessary for decision-making, while recognizing that industry proponents have the responsibility to provide development-specific information.

Respondents were asked to identify the most important environmental stressors for decision-making processes affecting caribou, water, and fish. For caribou, the most important stressors identified were 1) wildfire, 2) changing weather, 3) industrial exploration and development, and 4) roads and other linear features. For water and fish, the most important stressors were 1) wildfire, 2) contaminants, and 3) mining and milling operations.

1 Respondent Demographics

There were 48 respondents to the NWT CIMP Action Plan Survey; some responses were incomplete. Most respondents were either representatives of Government of the Northwest Territories departments or agencies or researchers, with 10 of 44 having multiple affiliations (Figure 1.1). 5 of 44 respondents were employees for Indigenous Governments, and 5 of 44 were community members, members of Indigenous organizations or both. Half of the respondents applied for NWT CIMP funding in the last five years (Figure 1.2).

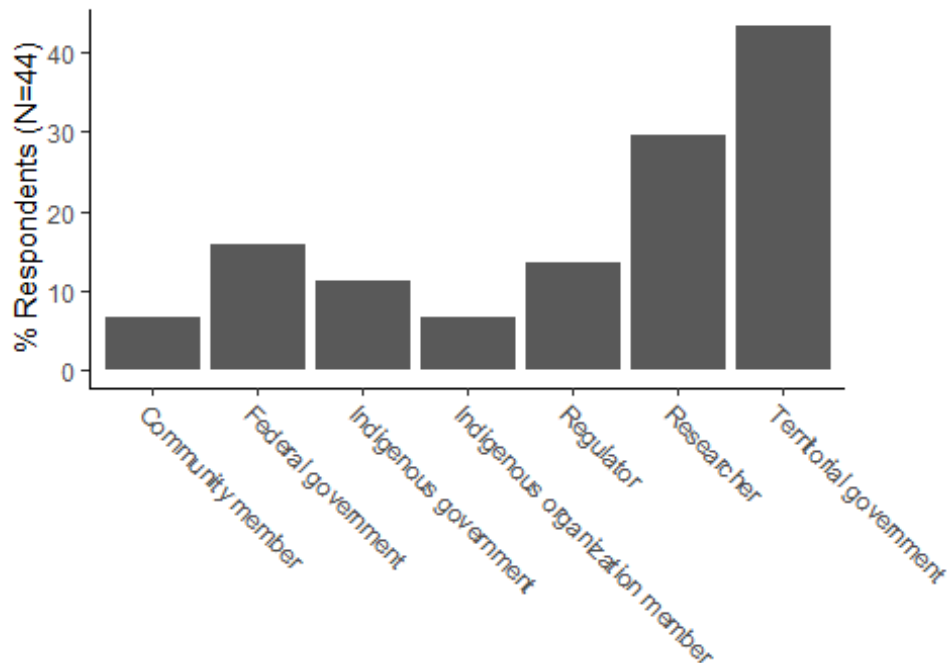


Figure 1.1: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “Which of the following groups do you belong to (specifically in your work with NWT CIMP over the last five years)?”

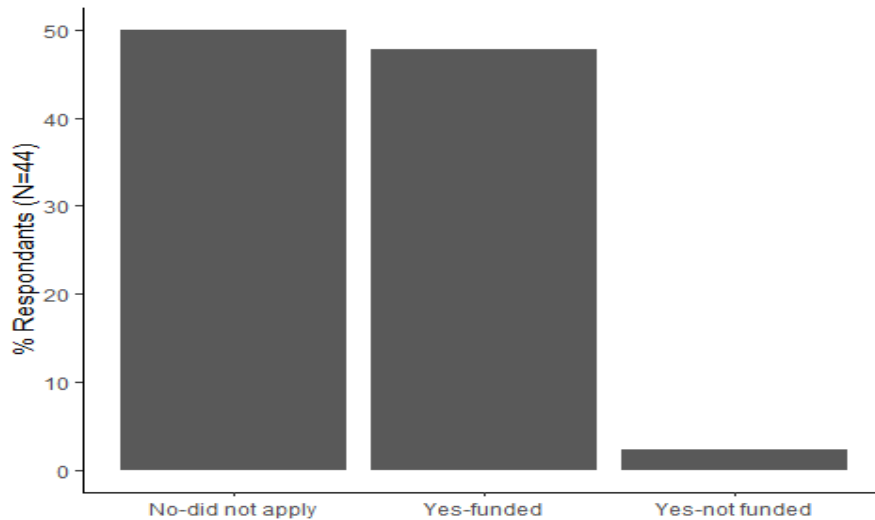


Figure 1.2: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “Have you applied for NWT CIMP funding over the last five years (2021-2025)?”

NWT CIMP reviewed respondent feedback and identified common themes and insights. While some direct quotes are included to illustrate key points, most comments are summarized to avoid repetition, improve clarity, and ensure respondent anonymity. NWT CIMP considered respondents “satisfied” if they reported that they were either “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied”.

2 Overall Satisfaction with NWT CIMP

Respondents rated their satisfaction with NWT CIMP's performance over the last five years in four areas:

- **Working with partners to understand cumulative impact monitoring and research priorities:** 80% satisfied (25/32).
- **Coordinating cumulative impact monitoring and research:** 70% satisfied (24/33).
- **Communicating results to decision-makers and the public:** 60% satisfied (19/31).
- **Providing information to support decision-making:** 50% satisfied (16/30).

Satisfaction levels were not significantly different between regulators, territorial and federal representatives, researchers, or Indigenous government representatives and community members.

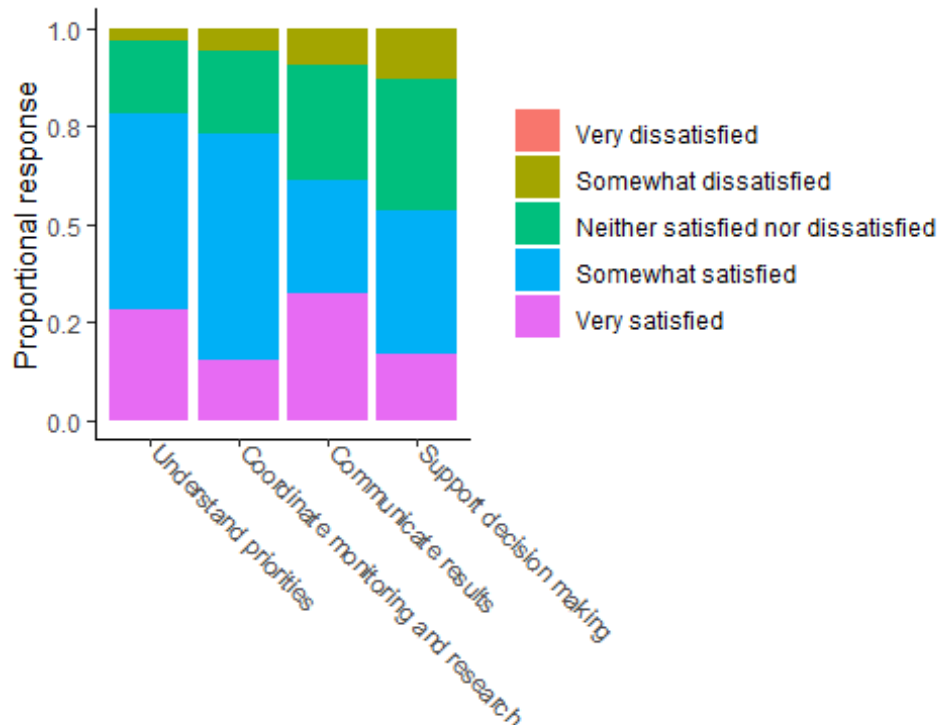


Figure 2.1: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “Overall, what is your level of satisfaction with NWT CIMP over the last five years in each of these activity areas?”

Respondents rated NWT CIMP's 5-year performance across five areas:

- **Identifying key monitoring priorities for caribou, water, and fish:** 60% satisfied (19/31).
- **Addressing high-priority research questions for decision makers:** 60% satisfied (19/31).
- **Promoting Traditional Knowledge in monitoring:** 80% satisfied (25/30).
- **Reporting to decision-makers:** 60% satisfied (17/27).
- **Ensuring monitoring and research results are accessible to communities and the public:** 80% satisfied (24/31).

Satisfaction levels were not significantly different between regulators, territorial and federal representatives, researchers, or Indigenous government representatives and community members.

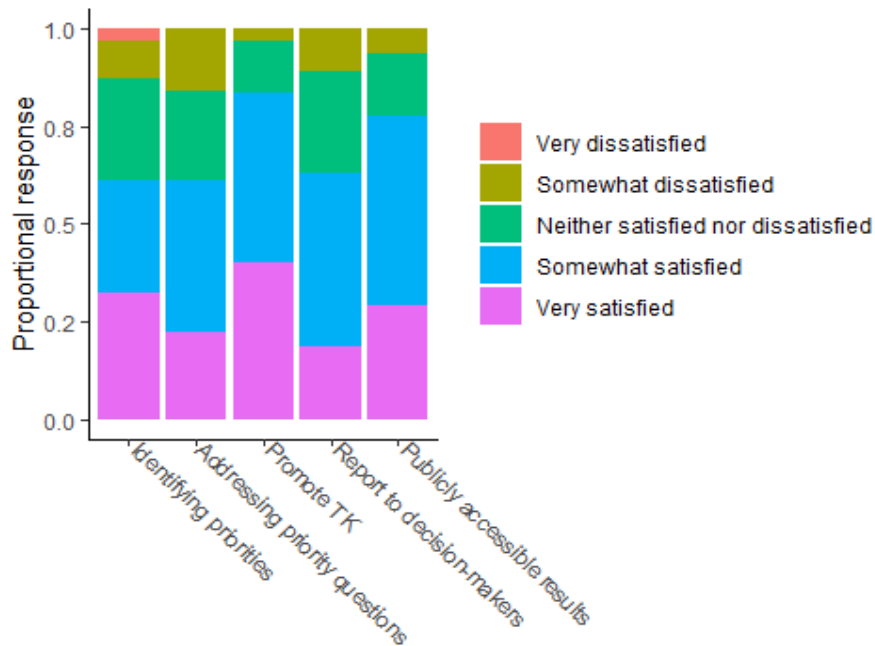


Figure 2.2: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “How satisfied are you with NWT CIMP’s performance on each of the following goals over the last 5 years?”

There were a few specific areas where respondents indicated dissatisfaction:

- Unclear whether there are priority topics that span across all three valued components.
- Baseline monitoring efforts that do not have fully developed research questions and consideration of alternative hypotheses do not provide a broader understanding of the environment, and instead lead to a “patchwork of limited studies”.
- “Baseline” science monitoring that is conducted now does not address the shifting baseline that has already occurred due to climate change and development. Traditional Knowledge could help to address these concerns.
- Raw data from NWT CIMP-funded studies for future use and public access is often inaccessible.
- One respondent clarified that their dissatisfaction stems not from the performance of NWT CIMP but from the complexity and scale of the information gaps for decision-making, which are both broad and highly specific, making them challenging to address effectively.

Additional suggestions and comments from respondents included:

- Expand funding for projects on wildlife of community interest like moose, bison, and furbearers. Caribou monitoring already receives significant territorial and federal funding.
- Pleased with NWT CIMP work to promote Traditional Knowledge and effectively communicating study results to communities.
- Clarify how NWT CIMP aligns its projects with regulatory decision-making needs, given its limited role in the regulatory field.
- Address the gap between academic research and the specific data needs of regulators, which should be filled by development project proponents and adequately resourced regulators. This will require regulators provide detailed input into priority questions and reporting needs.
- Use local community Guardian programs for water sampling and monitoring.

3 Funding process satisfaction and interactions with NWT CIMP

Respondents rated their satisfaction with NWT CIMP's funding process and interactions:

- **Proposal process:** 70% satisfied (17/24).
- **Project reporting requirements:** 60% satisfied (16/26).
- **Availability of information (e.g., results, data, reports):** 70% satisfied (20/27).
- **Presentation of results to communities:** 80% satisfied (20/25).

Satisfaction levels were not significantly different between regulators, territorial and federal representatives, researchers, or Indigenous government representatives and community members.

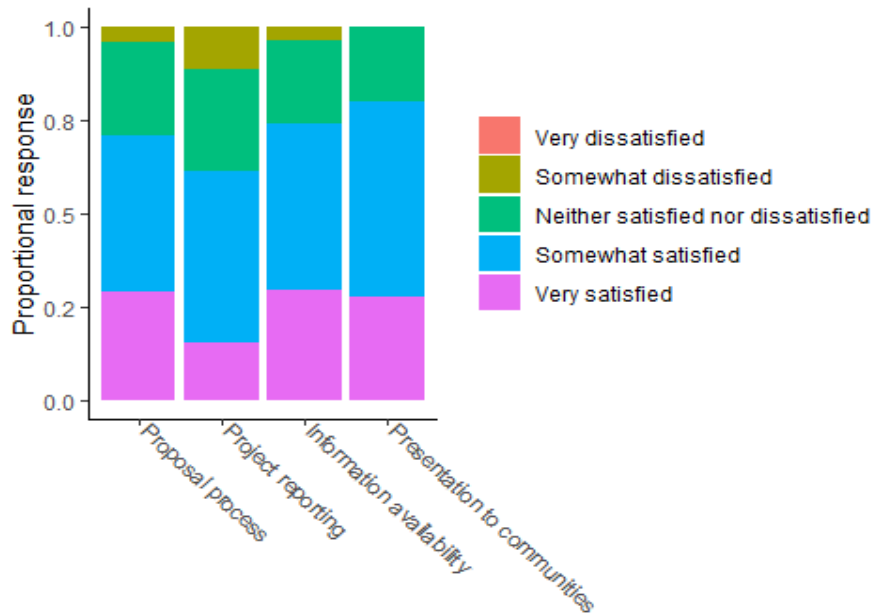


Figure 3.1: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “How satisfied are you with the project proposal process, project reporting process, availability of information such as project results, data and reports, and presentation of results to communities where the research and monitoring occurred over the last 5 years?”

Additional suggestions and comments from respondents:

- Simplify annual reporting.
- Streamline proposal and reporting templates to eliminate redundancy and reduce complexity, possibly by reducing length and using checkboxes or brief on/off-track updates, making them more manageable for project leads with multiple funders.
- Recognize that some projects are not yet at the stage where results are ready to communicate.
- Allow researchers to choose their preferred database for public data sharing, as Mackenzie Datastream is viewed as cumbersome and its data quality questionable for research purposes.
- Highlight NWT Environmental Research Bulletins (NERBs) and videos as effective tools for sharing research and encouraging timely reporting.
- Significant improvements were noted in proposal review processes and overall efficiency in the proposal and reporting process.

Respondents rated their satisfaction with NWT CIMP's communication and collaboration:

- **Communication with or from NWT CIMP:** 80% satisfied (21/27).
- **Collaboration with NWT CIMP:** 80% satisfied (21/27).
- **Access to cumulative impact monitoring and research results:** 80% satisfied (19/25).

Satisfaction levels were not significantly different between regulators, territorial and federal representatives, researchers, or Indigenous government representatives and community members.

Additional comments from respondents included:

- Interactions with NWT CIMP staff are exceptional, surpassing experiences with other funding programs.
- Plain-language reporting is highly valued and should continue.
- NWT CIMP excels at connecting regional and national researchers.
- Regional communication and workshops have decreased, with most interactions now limited to email.

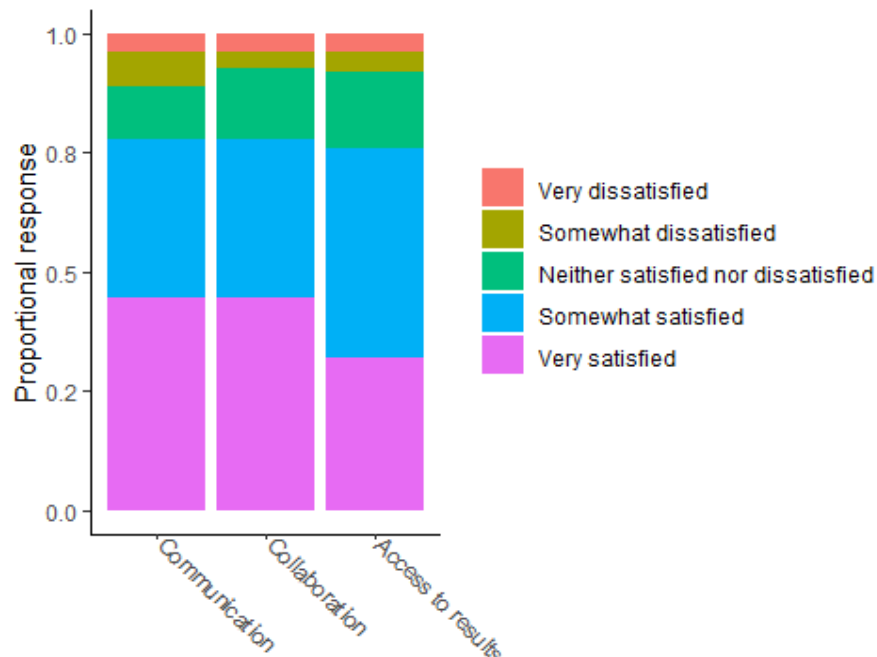


Figure 3.2: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “How satisfied are you with the following interactions you or your organization has had with NWT CIMP over the last 5 years? Specifically, rate your satisfaction with the

communication with or from NWT CIMP, collaboration with NWT CIMP and access to related cumulative impact monitoring and research results and information.”

4 Moving Forward

The top three program areas respondents suggested for NWT CIMP's focus over the next five years are:

- **Monitoring and research** (22/28 respondents)
- **Communicating results** (22/28 respondents)
- **Identifying priorities for decision-making** (19/28 respondents)

The options provided included (in no particular order):

- Identify key cumulative impact monitoring priorities for decision-making.
- Identify key trends used for decision-making.
- Support and conduct standardized environmental monitoring and high priority research and analysis.
- Support and conduct predictive cumulative impact mapping and modeling.
- Promote, support, and encourage Traditional Knowledge in cumulative impact monitoring and research.
- Promote, support, and encourage community capacity building.
- Promote, support, and encourage collaboration between multiple organizations.
- Communicate results to support decision-making and provide cumulative impacts information.

Respondents suggested additional focus areas:

- Clarify NWT CIMP's role in conducting standardized environmental monitoring as some respondents believe this is the responsibility of regulators and project proponents, based on territorial legislation.
- Emphasize that equal focus on all program areas is necessary to ensure effective communication of results for decision-making.
- Support for long-term research is required to understand the impacts of climate change and improve predictive modelling. Multi-disciplinary work will be needed to

address climate change processes such as permafrost thaw, lake drainage, and contaminant release.

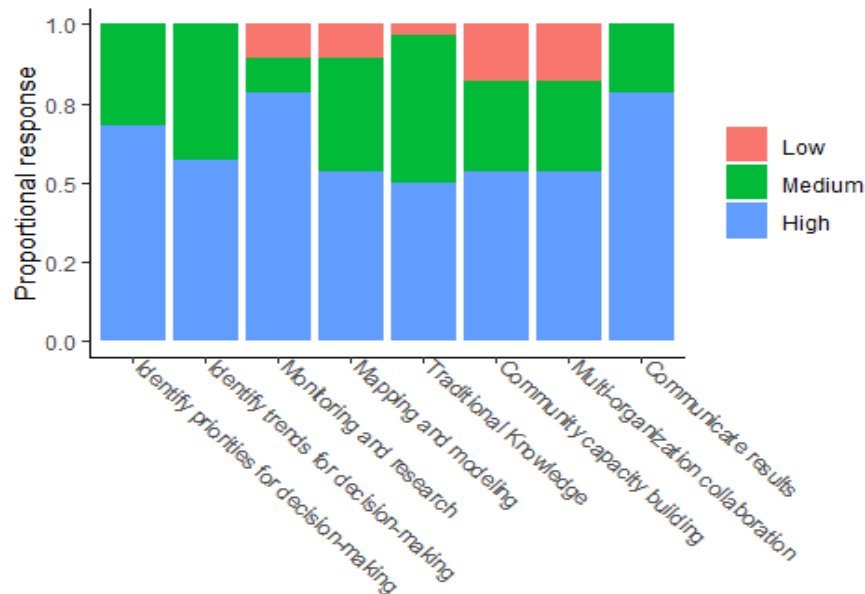


Figure 4.1: How important are the following topics for NWT CIMP to focus on over the next five years?

Respondents were also asked to identify the top 5 most important environmental stressors for decision-making processes affecting water and fish. The options given were adapted from NWT Waters Act Schedule B classification of undertakings and included:

- Mining and milling operations
- Other industrial exploration and development (e.g., oil and gas, manufacturing, pulp mills)
- Power generation (hydro or geothermal)
- Municipal development and sewage systems (including cabins)
- Roads (all-season, winter, and temporary) and other linear features (e.g., legacy seismic lines, pipelines, powerlines)
- Agriculture
- Permafrost thaw
- Changes in wildfire frequency and severity
- Changes in weather (e.g., extreme weather, changes in ice on/off)
- Flooding
- Drought
- Contaminants
- Other _____

The three environmental stressors to water and fish that respondents selected most often were 1) wildfire, 2) contaminants, and 3) mining and milling operations (Figure 4.2; 28 respondents). The two other categories identified by respondents were climate change and over harvesting.

Additional comments from respondents:

- Missing baseline information for many systems, such as fine-scale permafrost mapping across the NWT.
- Suggest focusing on cumulative impacts of municipal waste management, including solid waste, sewage, and water treatment discharges, and work towards clear standards for NWT communities.
- Concerns about contaminants from Fort McMurray/Tar Sands impacting Great Slave Lake, with limited public information and possible cumulative impacts from drought.
- Emphasize the link between socio-cultural and environmental impacts.
- Key concerns include hydrological changes (water levels, discharge, lake interactions), climate/weather variables (temperature, precipitation, extreme events), and geo-physical-chemical processes (nutrient cycling, trophic outputs).

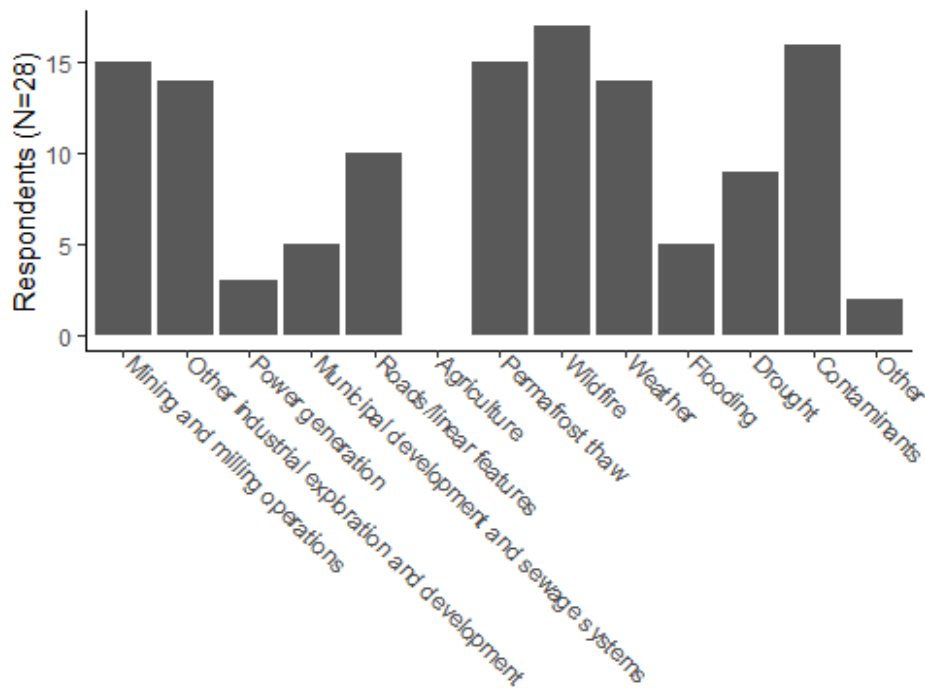


Figure 4.2: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “For decision-making processes affecting water and fish, which environmental stressors are your top priorities?”

Similarly, respondents were asked to identify the top 5 environmental stressors for decision-making processes affecting caribou. The options given included:

- Industrial exploration and development (e.g., mining and milling, exploration, oil and gas)
- Municipal and residential development (including cabins)
- Roads (all-season, winter, and temporary) and other linear features (e.g., legacy seismic lines, pipelines, powerlines)
- Other non-linear features (e.g., quarries)
- Permafrost thaw
- Changes in landscape vegetation distribution
- Changes in wildfire frequency and severity
- Changes in weather (e.g., drought, flooding, extreme weather, changing snow depth/crusting/melt)
- Harvest
- Predation
- Disease and parasites (including insects)
- Contaminants
- Abundance and distribution of other ungulates
- Other _____

The four environmental stressors to caribou that respondents selected most often were 1) wildfire, 2) changing weather, 3) industrial exploration and development, and 4) roads and other linear features (Figure 4.3). The “Other” stressor identified by a respondent was climate change.

Additional comments on caribou stressors:

- Highlight the cumulative impact of socio-cultural changes, disrespectful practices, and overharvesting.
- Focus on the cumulative impacts of mining and roads on caribou and the environment.
- Broaden the scope of NWT CIMP proposals to include predators and competitors of caribou, as these are key drivers of population dynamics. Limiting research to caribou (boreal and barren-ground) alone is viewed as restrictive and a missed opportunity to address broader ecosystem stressors, particularly when water and fish are broad categories.
- Address the lack of funding and research on Northern Mountain caribou, a priority for Dehcho and Sahtu communities. This ecotype is currently excluded from NWT

CIMP funding, creating a significant knowledge gap that should be prioritized in future funding cycles.

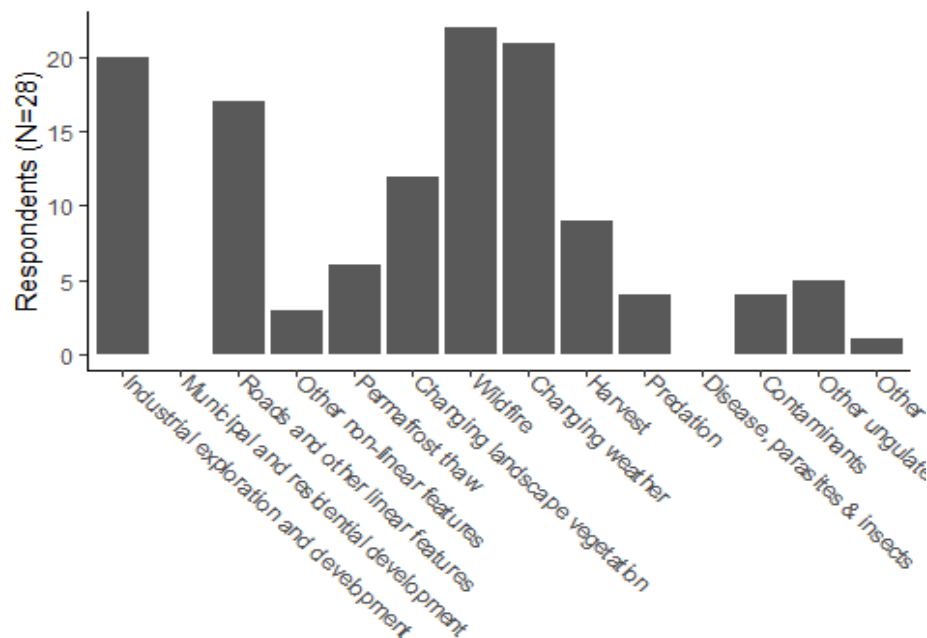


Figure 4.3: The Action Plan Survey asked respondents “For decision-making processes affecting caribou, which environmental stressors are your top priorities?”

Final thoughts and additional recommendations from survey respondents:

- Recognize ongoing improvements in program delivery and keep up the good work.
- Broaden wildlife funding priorities beyond caribou to include multi-species studies, addressing challenges in securing funding for other important species like moose and bison.
- Simplify and shorten proposal templates and the reporting process.
- Expand on successful initiatives like the Collaborative Caribou Initiative (with Polar Knowledge Canada), by creating more collaborative funding opportunities.
- Develop standardized monitoring protocols for long-term projects.
- Foster collaborations with Indigenous governments, territories, federal agencies, and academia.
- Encourage innovative, creative, and forward-thinking proposals. Leverage rapidly advancing technologies such as eDNA, stable isotope analysis, telemetry, AI, UAVs, satellite imagery, and big data.
- Consider adding an additional funding category to address issues requiring special attention.

Appendix A: Survey distribution list

NWT CIMP Steering Committee

Academic researchers

Environmental Impact Review Board
Environmental Impact Screening Committee
Fisheries Joint Management Committee
Gwich'in Land and Water Board
Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board
Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board
Inuvialuit Game Council
Inuvialuit Water Board
Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board
Sahtú Land and Water Board
Sahtú Land Use Planning Board
Sahtú Renewable Resource Board
Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board
Wek'èezhì Land and Water Board

Acho Dene Koe First Nation
Akaitcho Territory Government
Dehcho First Nations
Deninu K'ue First Nation
Fort Smith Métis Council
Gwich'in Tribal Council
Inuvialuit Game Council
Inuvialuit Joint Secretariat
Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation
Katl'odeeche First Nation
Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation
North Slave Métis Alliance
NWT Métis Nation
Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated
Tłıchǫ Government
Yellowknives Dene First Nation

Environment and Climate Change Canada

Fisheries and Oceans
Natural Resources Canada

GNWT-Environment and Climate Change
GNWT-Industry, Tourism, and Investment
GNWT- Education, Culture, and Employment

Aurora College