

Government of
Northwest Territories



Wildlife

Co-Management

in the Northwest Territories





Introduction

The Northwest Territories (NWT) is recognized as a world leader in the successful co-management of wildlife resources.

The responsibility for wildlife management is shared between governments, users and renewable resource boards set up under land claim agreements. Co-management provides direct involvement for Indigenous governments and organizations in wildlife management in their land claim area or region.

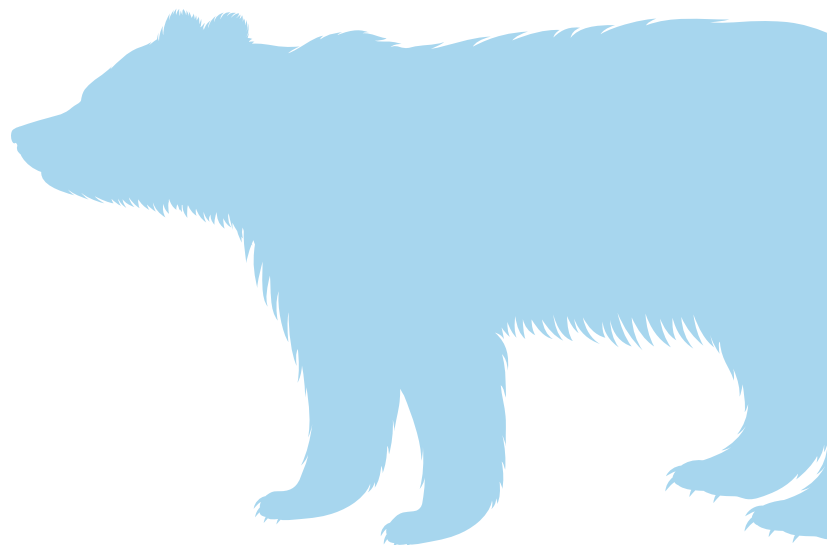
Wildlife management or renewable resources boards (co-management boards) have been established as **the main instruments of wildlife management in areas where land claims are settled.**

Current co-management boards set up under land claim and self-government agreements in the NWT are:

- **Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT) (www.jointsecretariat.ca)**, established under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement
- **Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (www.grrb.nt.ca)**, established under the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement
- **Sahtú Renewable Resources Board (www.srrb.nt.ca)**, established under the Sahtú Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement
- **Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board (www.wrrb.ca)**, established under the Tłı̨chǫ Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement



In non-settlement regions, the co-management system provides for input and involvement by Indigenous organizations in wildlife management. Consultation obligations for wildlife management in the NWT are based on land claim and self-government agreements, Aboriginal and treaty rights and case law.



Cover photo (owl and polar bear): Gordon Court

Role of Co-management Boards

The co-management system and the establishment of co-management boards under settled land claim and self-government agreements reflects the importance of wildlife to NWT land claim beneficiaries.

Co-management boards act in the public interest. However, the primary role of the boards is to integrate the interests of land claim beneficiaries in wildlife and environmental management into the ministerial decision-making process of the federal and territorial governments. Board members are nominated by the respective land claim organization or government and by the federal and territorial governments.

Although differing in structure and authority, co-management boards all provide an avenue for land claim beneficiary input into wildlife management. The boards use traditional and local knowledge and scientific information to make recommendations to governments on management decisions affecting wildlife within their respective settlement areas.

Community consultation is a critical component of the co-management system. An informed and engaged public is necessary for the process to be effective.

As the main instrument of wildlife management in their respective settlement areas, co-management boards are responsible for providing ministerial advice on all matters affecting wildlife and environmental management.

Boards also have the power to establish policies and propose regulations in respect of the harvesting of wildlife by any person, including any class of persons, the commercial harvesting of wildlife and commercial activities relating to wildlife.

Boards are also responsible for the establishment of a Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) in their respective settlement areas, if required. Priority for allocation of harvest under the TAH is established by the land claim agreements.

In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, hunters and trappers committees can pass by-laws, enforceable under the NWT *Wildlife Act*, to assist with the implementation of management decisions.

Under all agreements, the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) retains ultimate authority for the management of wildlife.

Implementation of decisions and recommendations made by the co-management boards that require regulations are implemented through the NWT *Wildlife Act* and regulations.

Other management actions, such as conservation education programs or allocation of harvest, are often implemented by the co-management boards or other land claim committees (e.g. Inuvialuit Game Council, hunters and trappers committees).



Photo: Gordon Court

Tłıchq Government

The Tłıchq Land Claims and Self-Government Agreement provides the Tłıchq Government with the power to enact laws “in relation to the use, management, administration and protection of Tłıchq lands and the renewable and non-renewable resources found thereon”.

The Tłıchq Agreement also states: “The Tłıchq Government and the Government of the Northwest Territories will, prior to the enactment of laws in relation to wildlife management, make every reasonable attempt to harmonize those laws to ensure maximum protection for wildlife in the Northwest Territories.”

The GNWT works cooperatively with the Tłıchq Government in developing wildlife management proposals for consideration by the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB). This approach is required under the Tłıchq Agreement. Recommendations by the WRRB are provided to both governments. The GNWT or, eventually, the Tłıchq Government develops legislation to support the recommendations, as required.



Photo: Gordon Court

Interim Measures Agreements

Interim Measures Agreements (IMAs) have been signed in areas without settled land claim or self-government agreements. IMAs provide for the protection, management or use of land and resources before land claim agreements are concluded.

While these agreements do not set out wildlife management in the areas, they do establish temporary arrangements clarifying the role of Indigenous organizations' resource management decision-making in their regions.

The IMAs also outline consultation requirements for the territorial and federal governments.

Current IMAs include:

- Akaitcho Interim Measures Agreement
- Dehcho First Nations Interim Measures Agreement
- Northwest Territory Métis Nation Interim Measures Agreement



GNWT Role in Co-management

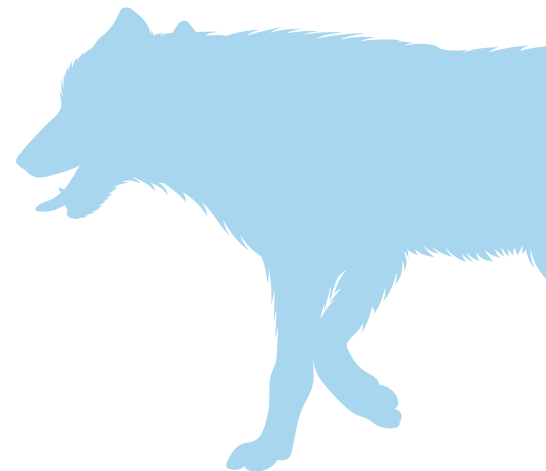
GNWT responsibility for wildlife management flows from the *Northwest Territories Act*. Implementation is accomplished through the *NWT Wildlife Act*. The current *Wildlife Act* applies to vertebrates, other than fish, that are naturally found wild in the NWT. This includes mammals such as big game, small game and furbearers, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

One of the primary roles of the GNWT is to collect and provide information to co-management boards. The boards also consider traditional and local knowledge in making recommendations. The GNWT also works with boards to share information with communities and participate in information sharing, consultation or engagement sessions.

The GNWT develops management actions and legislation on wildlife in settlement regions based on input, consultation and recommendations from the co-management boards.

In most cases, once a recommendation or proposed regulation is received from a co-management board, the Minister of ENR must accept, reject or modify the recommendations. If the Minister rejects or modifies the recommendations, the reasons must be provided in writing to the board.

The Minister of ENR has the authority to implement wildlife management actions based on decisions and proposed regulations provided by the co-management boards. ENR is responsible for enforcing the regulations.



Protecting Species at Risk

The *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* became law in February 2010. It is a tool to identify, protect and recover species at risk in the NWT. The Act provides a process to assess which species are at risk in the NWT, identify threats facing those species and identify actions needed to help them recover.

The Act applies to any wild animal, plant or other species managed by the GNWT. It applies everywhere in the NWT, on both public and private lands, including private lands owned under a land claims agreement.

The Act was developed collaboratively with land claims organizations and wildlife co-management boards and implementation is done through consensus with these organizations.

Additional information on the Act, including the NWT List of Species at Risk, can be found at www.nwt-speciesatrisk.ca.

Conference of Management Authorities (CMA):

Group of wildlife co-management boards and governments that share management responsibility for the conservation and recovery of species at risk in the NWT. The CMA provides direction, coordination and leadership on species at risk.

Species at Risk Committee (SARC):

An independent committee of experts on species, habitat, northern ecosystems, and conservation. SARC's role is to assess the biological status of species that may be at risk in the NWT.

NWT List of Species at Risk:

The legal list of species designated at risk under the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*.



Photo: Gordon Court

Photo (back cover): Gordon Court



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For more information:

www.enr.gov.nt.ca

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