

**TIBBITT LAKE TO CONTWOYTO WINTER
ROAD
MONITORING STATION REPORT**

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ABSTRACT

Since 2003, questionnaires have been given out at the Ross Lake check station to non-commercial users of the Lupin winter road. The questionnaire provides the Department of Environment & Natural Resources with information on reasons for winter road use, breakdown of winter use by community, and the amount of wildlife harvested along the winter road. Overall, the last three years show a decline in all aspects of the survey. The decline in numbers reported can be attributed to a shorter operating season, reduced numbers of caribou along the winter road resulting in a decreased harvest, and the occasional missed vehicle.

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BACKGROUND

Prior to 2003, little or no information was collected about how people were using the Lupin Winter Road for non-commercial purposes. Due to increased use of the winter road, The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) established a check station on Ross Lake in 2003 to monitor activities by collecting data from non-commercial road users. The Bathurst Caribou Management Plan (BCMP) and the Barren Ground Caribou Management Strategy (BGCMS) have identified documenting harvest numbers through winter road monitoring as a tool to determining how winter roads impact caribou herds.

All non-commercial users are asked to stop at the check station to answer a questionnaire (Appendix 1) and the data is put in to a database. The information collected gives insight to why people use the road and may help determine what impacts the road users have on wildlife and the surrounding environment. This questionnaire also records valuable caribou information that may be used by the BCMP and BGCMS, including information such as harvest numbers, sex, health and condition, and pregnancy rates of the caribou harvested, as well as numbers of caribou sighted along the winter road.

Since the check station has been in operation, ENR has compiled data on how many and what type of wildlife was harvested, why people are using the road and what communities they come from.

PARTNERS

ENR works in partnership with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) to run the check station. Rachel Crapeau with the YKDFN Land & Environment Office hires the monitors who work at Ross Lake on a two-week rotation. The monitor stays at a cabin next to the winter road and signs are erected that instruct non-commercial vehicles to check in.

Partial funding for winter road monitoring comes from parties with an interest in environmental monitoring concerns. For the 2006/2007 fiscal year, the West Kitikmeot Slave Study (WKSS) provides \$20,000 in funding, and the Winter Road Joint Venture Committee (JVC) provides \$10,000.

ENR meets with the JVC to discuss survey results and address concerns. The JVC also shares road information with ENR, which allows ENR to prepare for operation of the check station. Nuna Logistics builds and maintains the road and ENR stays in contact with them throughout the season to discuss any concerns in regards to wildlife issues. In the past, Nuna has built a turn-off leading up to the cabin, creating a driveway for vehicles checking into the station. Nuna also gives the monitors access to their camp at Dome Lake.

SURVEY RESULTS

The last three years of data have been compiled and provide the number of non-commercial vehicles traveling the road, why people were using the road, what community they came from, and the number for wildlife harvested by hunters, (Appendix 2).

Information collected from harvesters regarding pregnancy rates show that 31% of female caribou harvested along the winter road were pregnant. This is low compared to 75-80% pregnancy rates taken from community hunts throughout the 2006 season (personal communication, B. Croft). The low percentage reported from the winter road survey could result from lack of experience among the winter road monitors as some information regarding caribou sex and pregnancy was not recorded. Pregnancy rates for previous seasons are unavailable.

Overall numbers from the last three years show a decline in all aspects of the survey. Reasons for this include a shorter operating season. Attached are comparisons of the official winter road operating dates from the JVC and Ross Lake Check Station opening dates. Although the Ross Lake Check Station generally opens earlier and stays in operation past the official dates, road users typically travel when the road is officially open.

Open & Closing Dates of Winter Road and Ross Lake Check Station

Year	Official Date Opened	Ross Lake Opened	Official Date Closed	Ross Lake Closed
2004	January 28	January 09	March 31	April 09
2005	January 26	January 19	April 5	April 4
2006	February 5	February 4	March 26	April 12

Figure 1. Official Opening Dates for the Ross Lake Check Station Provided by the JVC

Another reason for the decline in survey results is the fact that there have been fewer numbers of caribou along the road resulting in lower harvest numbers. There are also instances when vehicles are missed. This is due to the fact that this past season there were problems finding a monitor and there are also times when the monitor is away from the station. ENR is, however, confident that the data gives a realistic number with respect to how many people are using the winter road.

The Ross Lake check station will continue to operate and steps are being taken to improve the check station.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

B. Croft, Bathurst Caribou Biologist, Department of Environment & Natural Resources,
Government of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife.

APPENDIX 1

Winter Road User Survey – Tibbitt to Contwoyto Road

Vehicle Information

Description of vehicle: _____

Vehicle license place origin (Territory/Province): _____ License plate no: _____

Accessory vehicles?(Snowmobiles/ATVs) **NO** → **YES** → How many? _____

Number of people in the vehicle: _____ Monitor's name: _____

Northbound Date: _____ Time: _____ AM PM **Southbound** Date: _____ Time: _____ AM PM
(Spell out month) (Spell out month)

Community representation (indicate the community for EACH person in the vehicle)

Yellowknife _____	N'Dilo _____	Ingraham Trail _____
Dettah _____	Rae/Edzo _____	Wha Ti _____
Gameti _____	Wekweti _____	Ft. Providence _____
Other (specify) _____		

Purpose for using the winter road (check all that apply):

Sight-seeing: _____ Camping: _____ Trapping: _____ (Licence #) _____

Cutting wood: _____ (Licence #) _____ Fishing: _____ (Licence #) _____

Hunting: _____ (Licence #) _____

Hunter classification: GHL _____ Special GHL _____ Resident _____ Non-Resident _____
(Use one √ per hunter) Non-Resident Alien _____

How many days for hunting? 1 2 3 Other _____

What animal species are/were you hunting? (check all that apply)

Caribou _____	Moose _____	Grouse _____
Wolf _____	Wolverine _____	Ptarmigan _____
Other (specify) _____		

Did any of you kill any wildlife this trip? YES / NO If YES, what species and how many?

Caribou _____ Moose _____ Wolf _____ Wolverine _____ Grouse _____

Ptarmigan _____ Other (specify) _____

Where? _____

For Caribou Kills:

How many were : Male: _____ Female: _____ Were any females pregnant?: _____

Adults: _____ Young: _____

How healthy were the caribou? Were they: Skinny _____

Not so skinny _____

Fat _____

Really Fat _____

Did you notice any disease or injury with these? **YES / NO**

What wildlife did you see? (Indicate how many): Caribou: _____ Moose: _____

Wolf? _____ Wolverine? _____ Other? (Specify) _____

Where were these sightings? (identify lake or portage #, if possible)

Were any of them lame or injured? **YES / NO** (please specify details below):

Did you see any infractions, e.g., meat wastage? **YES / NO** If **Yes** (identify where) _____

Did you see any contaminant spills? **YES / NO** If **Yes** (identify where) _____

See reverse side for any additional comments

APPENDIX 2

Main Purpose of Road Users

Activity	2004		2005		2006	
	# of Persons	# of Vehicles	# of Persons	# of Vehicles	# of Person	# of Vehicles
Camping	109	55	77	30	82	39
Fishing	384	180	334	135	157	62
Hunting	1206	573	731	326	640	284
Other	12	8	6	8	1	1
Sight Seeing	420	201	337	144	190	78
Unknown	134	102	30	25	30	24
Wood Cutting	19	13	14	8	8	2
Working	5	4	0	0	0	0
Total	2289	1136	1529	676	1108	490

Person Count by Community

Community	2004		2005		2006	
	# of Persons	# of Vehicles	# of Persons	# of Vehicles	# of Persons	# of Vehicles
Dettah	106	51	84	48	32	16
Fort Providence	8	3	0	0	0	0
Fort Resolution	5	3	16	7	0	0
Fort Simpson	8	4	0	0	0	0
Fort Smith	27	9	68	30	22	14
Hay River	34	15	55	19	14	5
Lutsel K'e	0	0	6	2	0	0
N'Dilo	80	28	34	12	34	8
Behchoko	18	8	4	2	2	1
Rae Lakes	0	0	4	2	0	0
Unknown	141	109	34	28	35	26
Yellowknife	1848	897	1188	514	931	406
Out of Territory	6	3	30	10	33	13
Out of Country	8	6	6	2	5	1
Total	2289	1136	1529	676	1108	490

Harvested Wildlife

Wildlife	2004	2005	2006
	# Harvested	# Harvested	# Harvested
Caribou	538	494	255
Grouse	0	1	0
Hare	0	1	0
Ptarmigan	5	0	0
Moose	0	2	0
Wolf	9	3	3
Wolverine	0	1	2
Total	552	502	260

Caribou Harvested by Hunter Type

Hunter Type	2004	2005	2006
	# Harvested	# Harvested	# Harvested
GHL	236	312	148
Resident HL	143	88	90
Unknown	159	94	17
Total	538	494	255