



Government of Yukon

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NEWSrelease

FOR RELEASE #11-011

January 20, 2011

Alaskan census finds Porcupine caribou herd numbers are up

WHITEHORSE—An aerial census conducted last July by the State of Alaska, although yet to be completed, confirms in excess of 123,000 animals in the Porcupine caribou herd, significantly higher than the estimate of 90,000-100,000 that biologists have worked with for the past few years, Environment Minister John Edzerza announced today.

"This is welcome news for all Yukoners," Edzerza said. "We appreciate the time and effort taken by Alaska to collect this essential information, given that efforts over the past nine years were foiled by bad weather and changed migration patterns."

At more than 123,000 animals, the *Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan* says licenced hunters may be permitted to take two bull caribou while subsistence (aboriginal) hunters are not limited. The "bulls only" measures for all hunters will be revisited by the parties to the plan when they meet in February to review all new information about the herd – census results, harvesting results, and migration patterns – and develop recommendations for management actions.

"We hope that all hunters will continue to do their best to hunt conservatively and report their harvest," Edzerza said. "A healthy herd size today does not prevent problems tomorrow, especially given the sharp declines many other caribou herds in the north are experiencing."

The Harvest Management Plan requires all hunters to report their harvest data, regardless of the herd's size. Researchers will continue to collect data about herd size, composition and health. Aboriginal groups will contribute local, community-based information.

The Government of Yukon put interim conservation measures in place in Fall 2009 based on best information available. These reflected a precautionary approach to address concerns the caribou population was declining. Harvest is one of the few factors that can be addressed to ease the effect of a decline on the herd. At that time, most of the harvest was unreported and the herd's population was not known. The government is now in the process of revising these measures to enable its commitments under the Harvest Management Plan.

For more information about the *Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan* visit www.taiga.net/pcmb.

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