

Government of Nunavut Information Request			
Reviewer's Department:	Department of Environment (DoE)	Information Request #:	42
Information Request From:	Government of Nunavut		
Information Request For:	Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation		
References:	Volume 6, Section 5.2, Pg. 129		
Issue/Concern or Information Deficiency and Request:	The DEIS is lacking information about the temporal distribution of harvested caribou and techniques used by hunters to locate caribou (ORV based searches, information from other people travelling on land, etc.). Please provide more data in this regard.		
Rationale:	Assessing the current level of habituation to off-road vehicles may help to better estimate and/or understand responses to future human activity along the Mile Inlet Tote road.		

BAFFINLAND RESPONSE

Baffinland understand that this information request is asking for information on

1. The temporal (yearly and seasonal) distribution of harvested caribou;
2. The techniques used by hunters to locate caribou; and
3. The current level of caribou habituation to ORV.

Baffinland assumes that temporal distribution of caribou harvest is based primarily on the abundance and distribution of caribou. For example, when caribou are more abundant and moving across the landscape they are more likely to come in contact with local communities, so the distribution of harvest is more likely to be concentrated around communities. Figure 4, Volume 6, Appendix F of the DEIS shows the distribution on harvest based on data obtained from the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's Harvest Study (1996-2001). During this period caribou were more abundant in North Baffin region and caribou harvest is concentrated in areas that are near or easily accessible from local communities. The current level and distribution of harvest is likely lower and less concentrated than during population highs because caribou abundance is low and caribou are not moving across the landscape as they did during times of caribou abundance.

Caribou are mainly a winter harvest species because harvest is limited by the ability of hunters to access caribou habitat. Hunters primarily access caribou habitat using snowmobiles because they are able to cover the landscape quickly when waterbodies are frozen and there is sufficient snow cover. The northern portion of the terrestrial wildlife RSA is harvested almost exclusively by Pond Inlet hunters. Pond Inlet hunters access the RSA primarily using Milne Inlet, Tay Sound, and Paquet Bay. The southern portion and middle of the RSA experiences much less harvest pressure (DEIS Volume 6, Appendix F, Figure 4) likely due to the remoteness of the area.

Harvesters likely locate caribou using a combination of personal knowledge, word of mouth, previous experience and searches using snowmobiles. Local people flying in to work at the Mine Site are unlikely to use the flight as a technique to gain knowledge on the distribution of caribou that could result in increased caribou harvest in the region, because caribou are difficult to spot from aircraft, particularly at

the elevations flown during flights between Pond Inlet and the Mine Site (i.e., transit flights are not low elevation).

There is no information available on current habituation to ORVs. ORVs, if used by Baffinland, are limited to roads on site. Published studies have presented results that suggest caribou are able to habituate to ORVs and aircraft if they do not associate these vehicles with mortality risk or other stresses (e.g. captures) (Reimers and Colman 2010). The current level of habituation in the project area is unknown. Project activities will have no influence on the use of ORVs by community hunters.

References

Reimers and Colman. 2006. Reindeer and caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) response towards human activities. *Rangifer* 26 (2): 55–71.