

# factsheet

Wildlife Management Advisory Council North Slope

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## Harvesting rights on the North Slope

### Inuvialuit have unique harvesting rights in the Yukon

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) defines the legal hunting, trapping and fishing rights of the Inuvialuit in their settlement region. This factsheet describes the harvesting rights of the Inuvialuit on the Yukon North Slope. Some of these rights are different from those in the Northwest Territories (NWT) part of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.

The Yukon North Slope stretches between the borders of Alaska and the NWT. It includes all of the land where the rivers and streams drain into the Beaufort Sea. It also includes islands, such as Herschel Island and both the near shore and offshore waters.

The IFA outlines special management arrangements for this large area. The main purpose of management of the area is to:

- Protect and conserve wildlife populations;
- Conserve the special environment; and
- Conserve traditional Inuvialuit use of the area.

The Inuvialuit have the right to hunt, trap and fish on the Yukon North Slope. In some cases, only the Inuvialuit may harvest certain animals, like the polar bear or furbearers.

In other cases, they share their harvest rights with other people but the Inuvialuit get special consideration. The Inuvialuit subsistence need for food, clothing and other personal use must be met first before others are given the right to harvest the same animals.

### Conservation is a priority

To help ensure the Inuvialuit are going to be able to hunt, trap and fish on the Yukon North Slope far into the future, it is important that wildlife populations be kept healthy today.

There are many scientific research studies that look at the health of the fish, marine mammals, birds and other wildlife. Also, local hunters and trappers provide information on how many animals they take each year. Meetings are held to share information and



Inuvialuit have the exclusive right to harvest polar bear on the Yukon North Slope.

concerns about wildlife. The Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee plays a special role in these discussions.

### Total Allowable Harvest

There may be a need to limit harvest if people think a certain type of wildlife needs special conservation to keep its population healthy. This limit would be called the Total Allowable Harvest.

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) (WMAc[NS]) would work with others to determine the Total Allowable Harvest. WMAc(NS) would then recommend this total to the appropriate government minister.

# Setting harvest quotas

If a Total Allowable Harvest has been established for a wildlife population, a quota will be used to distribute the total number of animals that can be harvested.

A quota may distribute the harvest:

- between different groups of harvesters (e.g. Inuvialuit and non-Inuvialuit);
- between different uses (e.g. subsistence, recreational, sport and commercial);
- between different communities;
- between different areas in the home range of the animal or in different parts of the community hunting area; and
- between different seasons.

If a Total Allowable Harvest is set for an animal that only Inuvialuit are allowed to harvest, then the Inuvialuit will be able to take all of the harvest. For example, if there was a Total Allowable Harvest of six polar bears set for the North Slope, then the Inuvialuit would be able to hunt all of these bears.

However, if the Inuvialuit have a preferential harvesting right for an animal, the Inuvialuit may get the entire quota or

they may be required to share the quota with other hunters (if the number of animals in the Total Allowable harvest are more than the Inuvialuit require for their subsistence needs like food, clothing and other personal use).

If there is a need to limit the harvest of an animal for conservation, then WMAC(NS) will determine both the amount of the Total Allowable Harvest and the Inuvialuit subsistence quota.

## Subsistence quota

To determine the subsistence quota, WMAC(NS) works with Hunters and Trappers Committees (HTCs) and governments to find out:

- what the Inuvialuit need for food and clothing;
- what amount the Inuvialuit have used in the past of that animal;
- how they use that animal;
- how many animals are available for harvest; and
- how the population of that animal might change over time.

If the species is a migratory bird, WMAC(NS) would also look at any national or international obligations Canada might have to that species.

Once a subsistence quota is set, the Inuvialuit Game Council works with local HTCs to determine (“sub-allocate”) how many animals each community is able to harvest.

For example:

If the muskoxen populations on the eastern part of the North Slope was small and needed to be protected, a Total Allowable Harvest may be set. Let’s say it was set at five muskoxen for that year.

WMAC(NS) and others would look at how many muskoxen the Inuvialuit needed for subsistence. If they figured out Inuvialuit needed all five muskoxen for subsistence, this would leave no muskoxen for others to hunt in the area. The entire quota would go to the Inuvialuit.

## Definitions

### Words that describe what can be harvested:

**Wildlife:** all animals that live in the wild, including fish, marine mammals and birds, not including reindeer.

**Fish:** all fish, marine mammals, shellfish, and shrimp.

**Game:** all wildlife except for fish and migratory birds.

**Migratory game birds:** most ducks, geese and other birds people usually hunt. It doesn’t include birds like robins that live on insects or non-game birds like loons and herons.

**Furbearers:** animals that are or may be harvested by trapping (not including black or grizzly bears).

### Words that describe harvesting rights:

**Harvest:** to hunt, fish, trap or gather.

**Exclusive right:** Inuvialuit are the only ones that can harvest wildlife (or permit non-Inuvialuit to harvest wildlife). For example, the Inuvialuit have the exclusive right to hunt polar bears and furbearers on the North Slope.

**Preferential right:** Inuvialuit right to harvest for subsistence has priority over other people’s harvesting rights in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.

**Quota:** number of animals from the Total Allowable Harvest that a particular group of hunters (e.g. Inuvialuit/non-Inuvialuit, or different communities) can take for a particular purpose (subsistence, recreational, sport and commercial uses).

**Subsistence usage:** Inuvialuit harvesting of wildlife for their own use for food or clothing, and for trading, bartering or selling the non-edible parts of wildlife with other Inuvialuit. There are some differences for Migratory birds.

**Total Allowable Harvest (TAH):** sometimes, for conservation reasons, there is a limit put on the number of wildlife that may be harvested in a year. This is the Total Allowable Harvest. If the Inuvialuit have an exclusive right to harvest, they will be able to harvest all of the Total Allowable Harvest. In other cases, the Inuvialuit may get the first share of the Total Allowable Harvest, to meet their subsistence needs. Other hunters may get the remaining share of the Total Allowable Harvest.

## A summary of harvesting rights

	Ivvavik National Park and Herschel Island Territorial Park	Area between Ivvavik National Park (east of Babbage River) and the Northwest Territories border	Crown Lands in Northwest Territories (Western Arctic)
<b>EXCLUSIVE RIGHT:</b> Only the Inuvialuit may harvest these animals in these areas (or they may permit others to hunt them):	Polar bear Musk Ox Grizzly & Black bear Furbearers Caribou* Other big and small game Migratory birds	Polar bears Furbearers	Polar bear Musk Ox Grizzly & Black bear Furbearers
<b>PREFERENTIAL RIGHT:</b> The Inuvialuit have the first opportunity to harvest what they need of these animals for food, clothing and other personal use. Others may also have the right to harvest these animals, after Inuvialuit needs are met.	Fish	Musk Ox Grizzly & Black bear Caribou* Other big and small game Migratory birds Fish	Caribou Other big and small game Migratory birds Fish

\*The right to harvest caribou is affected by the Porcupine Caribou Agreement



The Inuvialuit have the exclusive right to harvest furbearers - wolves, wolverine, arctic fox, red fox and other small mammals - on the Yukon North Slope.

## Porcupine Caribou

The Porcupine Caribou Herd travels from its calving grounds in northern Alaska down to wintering areas in the Yukon and Northwest Territories (NWT).

The caribou are harvested by many different people in Alaska, Yukon and NWT, including the Inuvialuit.

In 1985, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) was set up by the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Dene Nation and Metis Association of the NWT and the governments of Yukon, NWT and Canada.

The PCMB became responsible for monitoring the well-being of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. It also recommends steps governments and others can take to protect the Herd and Aboriginal rights to harvest the Herd.

If there is a need to limit the harvest of the herd to protect its population for current and future generations, the PCMB may recommend setting a Total Allowable Harvest. The PCMB may also specify areas where hunting may or may not occur.

## The importance of reporting harvest amounts

Annual harvest reporting is important to assist in the management of wildlife. It is also useful for determining any wildlife compensation claims by Inuvialuit hunters in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.

If an animal has a harvest quota placed on it, harvesters must report information on their harvest of this animal. Harvest information is also collected using hunter recall surveys.

For example, for a number of years, the Aklavik Harvest Data Collection Program has collected information on the Inuvialuit harvest of moose, caribou, sheep, and furbearers in the Yukon and NWT. The Yukon Government, in partnership with the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee, has contracted a local person to conduct interviews with local Inuvialuit hunters and trappers. This person records the hunter's name and information on the species harvested, the date, location, sex and age of the animal.

### Other harvesting facts

Normally, Inuvialuit do not need to get a permit or license to harvest wildlife, but they might be asked to show proof that they are an Inuvialuit beneficiary.

If the harvest numbers of some wildlife need to be limited for conservation, permits or licenses might be required to help monitor and control the harvest. However, if they are needed, the government will provide permits and licenses to the Inuvialuit for free.

The Inuvialuit right to harvest also includes the right to sell the non-edible parts of animals that they harvest (some limitations may be placed on this right to sell by the Migratory Birds Convention Act).

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board is responsible for monitoring the well-being of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. *Photo credit Yukon Government.*



To view additional factsheets in this series, please visit our website or contact our office:

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