

George River Caribou Management



Why Are We Consulting?



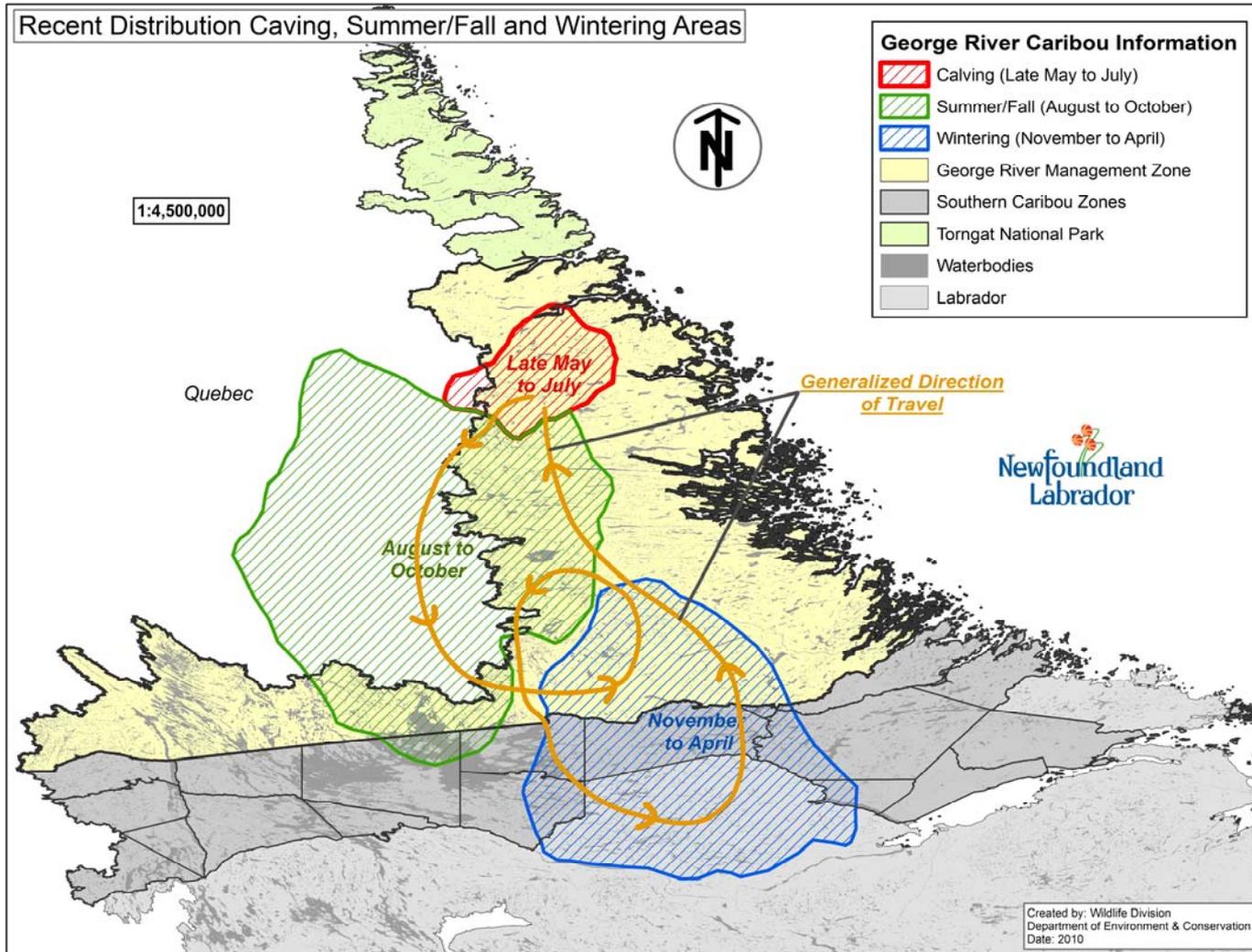
- To discuss the status of the George River caribou herd;
- Request input on harvest management actions for this herd for the immediate 2010/11 season;
- Your input will be one of several sources of information that will help inform the development of the 2010/11 harvest management plan.

Background



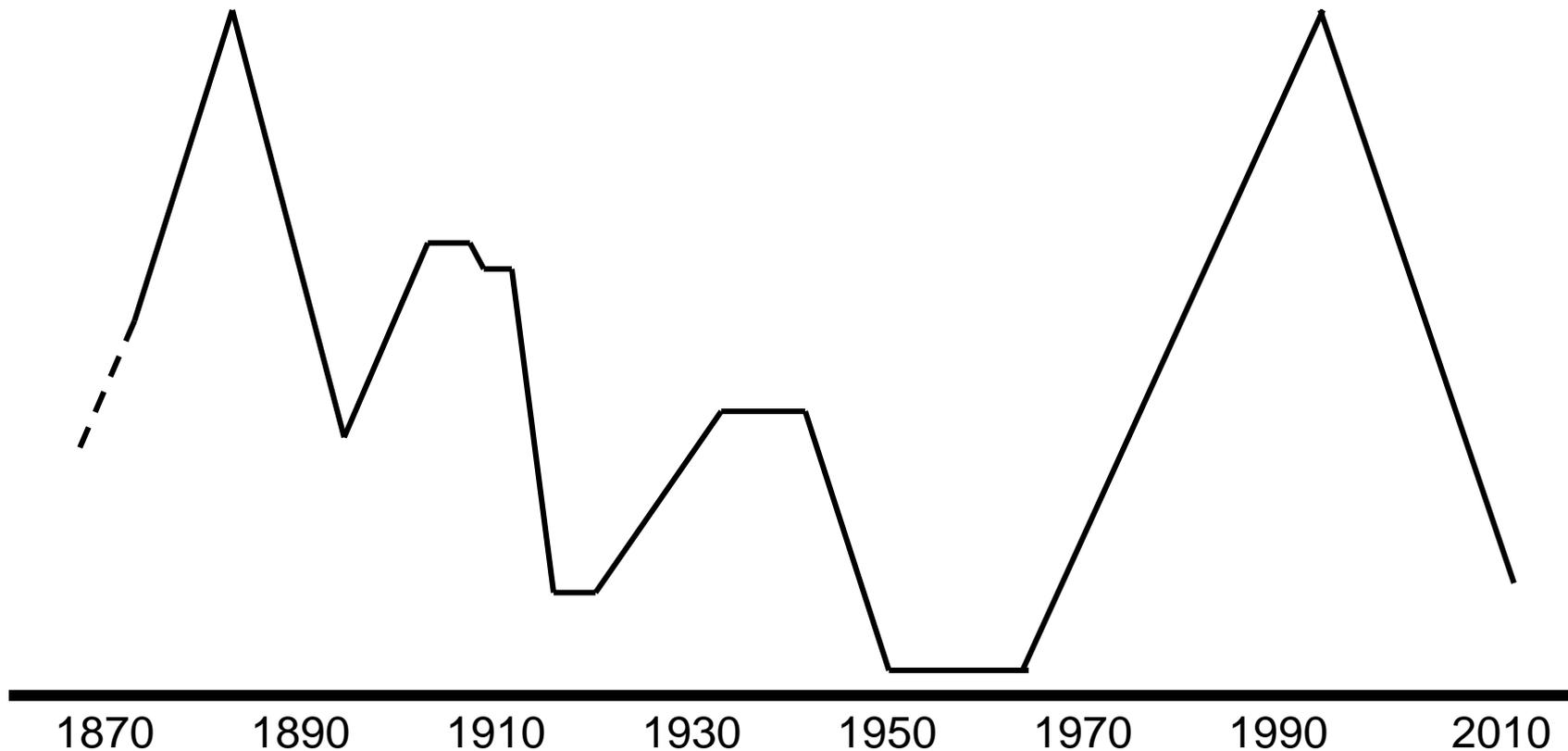
- George River Caribou are woodland caribou (migratory ecotype) whose range overlaps Quebec and Labrador;
- Large scale population cycles occurring over 40 – 70 year time scales;
- George River herd increased from 15,000 in the 1950s to 800,000 in the late 1980s;
- 1993 population estimate ~ 775,000 animals (photo census)
- 2001 population estimate ~ 385,000 animals (photo-census)

Background



Population Cycles

Relative Abundance of George River Caribou, Quebec/Labrador



(Adapted from Bergerud *et al.* 2008, "The Return of Caribou to Ungava")

Current Harvest Management



- Developed in 1980s during population increase.
 - 2 caribou per licence
 - Ability to transfer licences
 - Lengthy season; August to April
 - Outfitting
 - Commercial harvest
- Until recently, liberal harvest strategy did not limit population growth.
- The courts have ruled that special considerations apply to harvesting by Aboriginal peoples for domestic purposes, subject to laws respecting conservation, public health and safety.
- The Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement defines Labrador Inuit rights to harvest for domestic purposes in the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area.

Population Monitoring



- In recent years, there have been indications of continued decline.
- Post-calving census 2010 (aerial photography)
 - Partners:
Government of Quebec,
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Laval University, Nunatsiavut Government, Torngat Plant and Wildlife Co-Management Board, Institute for Environmental Research and Monitoring.



What is a Photo Census?



- Caribou form large groups to avoid insects;
- Collars were put on 102 George River caribou in 2009 and 2010;
- In July 2010, groups of caribou were located using radio collared animals;
- Photos of caribou groups were taken from helicopter;
- The number of adult caribou in each photo will be counted and a final population estimate will be calculated;
- Preliminary estimates were determined by each observer in the helicopter independently estimating the number of caribou in each group.

What is a Photo Census?



- 102 collars deployed
- 75 active at census
- 73 located on census
- 44 photographed for census

- 2 helicopters
- 4 people/helicopter
- 70 hours flying
- July 8 - 17
- NL, QC, TWPCB

Population Monitoring



- **Preliminary results** confirm a continued decline
 - Final results expected late fall
- Harvest is now significant and cumulative to natural mortality
- Annual harvest is estimated at 9,000 animals (Labrador/Quebec)
 - Harvest estimate has been as high as 38,000 animals/year
 - Majority of current harvest on GRC occurs in Labrador

Aboriginal Rights



- Aboriginal people in Canada have a right to harvest for food, social and ceremonial purposes.
- Such rights are site and fact-specific.
- Conservation and safety take precedence over such rights, but the infringement must be reasonable.
- Labrador Inuit rights are set out in Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.
- Labrador Innu rights are to be set out in a land claims agreement.

What we think

- Current management is extremely liberal
 - No Total Allowable Harvest
 - 2 animals per license
 - License transfer
 - Lengthy season
- Current harvest levels are not sustainable
- Current harvest is contributing to the decline
- Long-term management (post 2010/11) will likely be more restrictive



What do you think?

- What should we change?
 - No Total Allowable Harvest
 - 2 animals per license
 - License transfer
 - Lengthy season
 - Commercial harvest
 - Outfitters/non-residents
 - Residents



What do you think?

- How should we make the changes?
 - No Total Allowable Harvest
 - 2 animals per license
 - License transfer
 - Lengthy season
 - Commercial harvest
 - Outfitters/non-residents
 - Residents



What do you think?

- What are the challenges to implementing changes and how do we overcome them?
 - No Total Allowable harvest
 - 2 animals per license
 - License transfer
 - Lengthy season
 - Commercial harvest
 - Outfitters/non-residents
 - Residents



Next Steps



- Information from all meetings will be summarized;
- Recommendations will be presented to the Provincial Government;
- Management actions will be implemented for 2010/11;
- A long-term management plan for the George River caribou herd will be developed and will involve further consultations;
- Discussions with Quebec will continue to ensure integrated management strategies across borders.

Thank You

