

Churchill Wildlife Management Area Tundra Vehicle Issuance Criteria (2026–2027)

This document provides criteria to inform tundra vehicle allocation decisions in the Churchill Wildlife Management Area (CWMA). Each is linked to the purpose of section 2(1) of The Wildlife Act and the objectives of the CWMA Management Plan and identifies the types of information that will be considered in decision-making.

1. Consistent implementation of the CWMA Management Plan

This considers whether proposed operations are consistent with CWMA management direction, including protection of sensitive tundra ecosystems, limits on disturbance, and the long-standing cap on tundra vehicle use in Zone 2.

- Applicants could demonstrate their commitment to low-impact operations by submitting operational plans that respect ecological limits, along with GPS tracks that show adherence to designated trails and avoidance of sensitive tundra areas.

2. Long-term sustainability of polar bear viewing in the Churchill region

This considers whether proposed activities reflect sustainable wildlife viewing industry practices over time that can persist under changing ecological conditions, including climate change and sea ice loss.

- Applicants could demonstrate this by submitting business and operational plans that avoid increasing pressure on wildlife, along with environmental sustainability plans that include measurable goals such as reducing emissions and minimizing tundra disturbance.

3. Protection of polar bears and other wildlife from disturbance, displacement, or habituation

This considers conservation by minimizing negative human–wildlife interactions, recognizing that reducing disturbance and habituation risks is increasingly important as polar bears spend more time on land.

- Applicants could demonstrate this by submitting wildlife interaction protocols, vehicle operation practices, and staff training on wildlife safety, including measures to avoid polar bear sensitive habitats or critical periods.

4. Operational safety and visitor management considerations

This ensures operators can safely manage visitors in a remote, wildlife-sensitive environment

- Applicants could demonstrate this by submitting staff training programs, emergency response plans, polar bear safety procedures, and visitor safety briefings.

5. Compliance history of applicants with previous WMA Use Permits and applicable legislation

This considers the extent to which applicants have demonstrated lawful and responsible conduct in past operations. A strong compliance record supports effective wildlife management and reduces risks to habitat and species.

- Information could be drawn from COS annual reports and related documents to show past permit compliance, including any conservation officer citations, enforcement actions, convictions, and evidence of corrective measures taken. Additional relevant information includes holding a valid Resource Tourism Operator Licence and noting any past issues with that

licence, as well as the applicant's history of meeting CWMA Use Permit conditions, including reporting and operational requirements.

6. Operational capacity of applicants to conduct activities responsibly within the WMA

This evaluates whether applicants have the experience, resources, and systems in place to operate in a sensitive northern environment.

- Applicants could demonstrate this by outlining their operational history in Churchill or similar northern environments, including years of experience with tundra vehicle or wildlife viewing tours in the CWMA to showcase their proven ability to provide ecotourism in this uniquely sensitive area. They may also provide information on staffing capacity, including trained guides and drivers, and capital investments in the CWMA.

7. Broader public interest considerations

This considers whether permitting decisions reflect community values, support local and Indigenous participation, and contribute to conservation education and regional benefits.

- Applicants could demonstrate this by providing information on Indigenous ownership or partnerships, the percentage of Indigenous employees, and commitments to hiring from Churchill or northern Manitoba. They could describe educational programming on polar bear ecology, climate change, tundra ecosystems, and Indigenous knowledge, and provide evidence of contributions to local economic development.

Applications for the WMA Use Permits including ones for Churchill are available at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/elicensing/index.html>

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