

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

February 7 and 10, 2011
Inuvik, NT

In attendance

Members/Alternates

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Marsha Branigan, Government of the Northwest Territories
Dorothy Cooley, Government of Yukon
Mike Gill, Government of Canada
Steve Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
Steven Buyck, Nacho Ny'ak Dun
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council
Liz Wright, Gwich'in Tribal Council (Feb. 7)
Frederick (Sonny) Blake, Gwich'in Tribal Council (Feb. 10)
Lance Nagwan, Vuntut Gwitchin Government (Feb. 10)

Roberta Joseph, Trondek Hwech'in (alternate)
Deana Lemke, Secretariat

Don Russell (presenter by teleconference)

Welcome and Opening Prayer

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., and welcomed participants to the meeting. Billy Storr offered the opening prayer.

Review Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed by the Board and approved as distributed.

Motion to accept agenda
Moved by Billy Storr
Seconded by Steve Taylor
Carried

Review Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the November 27 and 28, 2010 meeting were approved by the Board and the action items were reviewed and discussed.

Motion to accept Minutes of the November 27 and 28, 2010 meeting as distributed

Moved by Mike Gill

Seconded by Steve Taylor

Carried

Chair's Update (Joe Tetlich)

The Chair provided an update on activities since the last meeting:

- Preliminary photocensus results are in, as everyone is aware. A population of "significantly greater than 123,000 caribou" is good news, but surprising. We still need to be optimistically cautious.
- Chair met with community members in old Crow during his visit there in December.
- Chair travelled the Dempster Highway in the fall to speak with hunters.
- Chair attended the CARMA meeting in Vancouver at the end of November.

Steve Taylor raised a concern related to the credibility of science relied upon to inform decision-making to date.

Billy Storr reminded that because we couldn't get a photocensus, we erred on the side of caution. That is taking the precautionary approach and is the most reasonable position to take under the circumstances.

Mike Gill mentioned that the information that came out of the Arctic Borderlands Co-op indicated that the herd's population was not as low as we thought. He also reminded that even though we know the herd is at least at 123,000 animals currently, we don't know if it is increasing or decreasing. We need to be careful about how we present that information without understanding what the trend is.

Marsha Branigan added that we were using the best information available, using the worst-case scenario. That was always how the information was presented. The computer model is being adjusted so that it is a better, more accurate tool for decision-makers.

Administrative and Financial Report (Deana Lemke)

Secretariat provided an administrative report on activities since the last meeting. A focus was continued work with Lindsay Staples and the Senior Officials on the HMP Implementation Plan, which was finalized and distributed to Parties for signature.

Secretariat attended the CARMA meeting at the end of November, along with the Chair.

Finance

A financial update was provided for year-to-date expenditures and variance on budget.

A proposed 2011-12 budget was presented and discussed. It was suggested that the Board may want to facilitate/host a harvest gathering/monitoring workshop with the communities' harvest program administrators. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

New funding agreements will need to be put in place for the upcoming fiscal year. CWS indicated that it will try to do a multi-year funding agreement this year.

The Board's website has been updated. If members have further updates or revisions, advise Secretariat.

A Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee has been struck including members of Government of Yukon and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. It will be hosting workshops and public meetings to discuss a wolf conservation management plan. The Board has been invited to participate in the public discussions.

Cumulative Effects Project

The Chair and Secretariat met with Don Russell in early February to discuss the CE project. Shawn Francis provided the human disturbance (footprint) map and vegetation map.

Don Russell joined the meeting by conference call. He provided an overview of his proposed CE project approach for the remainder of this fiscal year and the upcoming fiscal year (attached). Key people are on board for various aspects of this project. Product delivery will be important for this year and next year.

How this integrates to recent and future land use planning was discussed. This should be explored when undertaking this project.

The deadline for the proposed deliverables is March 31, 2012. Products can be reported on as they come out. Quarterly progress reports were agreeable to Don; layperson language should be used.

Membership

Several Parties need to ensure appointments are current and that alternates are appointed as necessary.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government advised that Lorraine Netro has resigned as she has taken on the role of Deputy Chief with VGG. Lance Nagwan was appointed to replace Lorraine; David Frost has been appointed as the alternate.

The alternate for Canada will likely be a Parks Canada appointee – will advise by next meeting.

Government of the Northwest Territories is working on appointing their alternate.

Nacho Nyak Dun should have letter coming in soon with respect to appointment of their alternate.

At the next meeting the Board will revisit its honoraria policy with a view to ensuring it is current. Secretariat was asked to research the amount of honoraria members and Chairs are receiving for comparable boards.

Action 11-01: Secretariat to research honoraria amounts for other comparable boards and advise by next Board meeting.

IPY Meeting

IPY results workshop in January was attended by Steve Taylor on behalf of the Board. This is the last year of IPY funding. Steve provided an overview of the meeting.

Some professionals have offered their expertise to work on projects such as those related to the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat, especially related to climate change (e.g. analyzing the nutritional value of the food caribou have access to; analyzing burn areas and how they relate to changing caribou migration patterns).

Research Needs list

The Board agreed that it would be useful to put together a research needs list to guide researchers interested in undertaking projects related to the herd or its habitat.

The PCTC's job is to provide the technical information the Board needs to do its job. The Board should consider what information it needs. Suggestions include:

- How can traditional knowledge be incorporated into decision-making?
- Would a decrease of lichen on the North Slope affect caribou migration?
- Do mud slides affects migration patterns?
- How will climate change affect the herd?
- What effect do "fast melts" (flooding) in the springtime have on the caribou?
- How do extreme weather events (e.g. flooding or icing) affect the herd?
- How do predators such as eagles affect the herd?
- What effect would there be if there were more insects than normal?
- What effect does new vegetation or erosion have on the herd?

The Board agreed to put more thought into this Research Needs List. In the meantime, Dorothy will explore this subject with the PCTC.

Action 11-02: The Board to further discuss a Research Needs List at the next meeting.

Caribou Herd Update

Yukon update

Dorothy Cooley provided an update on work related to the caribou, as follows:

- Attended CARMA meeting in November/December. The synthesis documents are due to the *Rangifer* journal by the end of March as they will be running a special issue on CARMA.
- Rut count was conducted in October 2010 by two teams (Alaska and Yukon). The sample size was 53 collars. Estimated bull ratio was 57 bulls per 100 cows this year. This is similar to the 1980 estimate of 60 per 100. This info will feed into the caribou computer model.
- Caribou Population Estimator program is being developed (to replace the Caribou Calculator), along with the caribou risk analyzer (decision-support tool). Craig Nicolson has been contracted by Government of Yukon on behalf of the PCTC to do this work; contract expires March 31, 2011.
- Alaska Fish and Game distributed a news release regarding their progress in counting the 2010 census photos. They released this information early in order to provide it for consideration at the AHM. The Alaskans expect to have the final number in March.
- Check station and Dempster patrol update was provided.
- Government of Yukon is planning to appoint a new Board member this summer.

GNWT update

Marsha Branigan provided an update as follows:

- Resident harvest data was completed.
- Check station report will be ready for tomorrow. Around 400 animals were recorded during the operation period. Significant hunter education has been done through the check stations. Highway signs are done, awaiting approval for location to erect signs. The signs will be modified based on the recommendations of the Board.
- Under the proposed new GNWT *Wildlife Act* there will be no requirement for a permit to serve wild meat at a function as long as it's not for profit.

Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines

The Board discussed the draft Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines. Marsha Branigan agreed to incorporate comments received to date, for the Board to discuss and finalize at the next meeting.

Action 11-03: Marsha Branigan to incorporate comments on draft Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines, for the Board's discussion at its next meeting.

Harvest Management Plan Update

HMP Implementation Plan

Senior Officials are finalizing their work on the HMP Implementation Plan; signatures are anticipated in the near future.

Annual Harvest Meeting

The Board discussed the format and process for the Annual Harvest Meeting scheduled for February 8-10.

The Board met following the AHM, to continue with its regular Board meeting. AHM media release will be completed and issued. The Board was reminded that all discussion related to the AHM is in camera, confidential to the Board members only.

The next AHM will be held in Dawson February 7 to 9, 2012.

Harvest Monitoring Workshop will potentially be coordinated for June 11 and 12, 2011. The Board will discuss this further at the next meeting.

Members' Concerns

Each Board Member provided closing comments/concerns:

Billy Storr: enjoy being on the Board.

Steve Buyck: glad we're trying to get the AHM report out right away. Meeting overall was very productive. Great to get photocensus done, looking forward to confirmed number of the population. Still cautiously concerned about the herd estimator. Concerns expressed from community members re not trusting numbers. Meeting was good. Glad to be here.

Steve Taylor: no concerns. We did a really good job at these meetings and writing it up. Knew it was going to be hard to do. It was a very good job for first time and it was done in good time.

Mike Gill: no concerns. Reiterate what was just said. Was worried about AHM meetings and how they would come off. Great to see good will and success of meeting, and similar approach at this table, especially for long-term conservation of the herd. Hats off to all for the good job.

Frederick Blake: the Board made a good decision giving responsibility to the signatories for the HMS in order to get buy-in. Happy that count is above 123,000. Interim measures were emergency measures and we aren't in an emergency situation. That is part of legislation – very difficult to take the regulations out once they're made legislation. Happy that all the user groups are working together. There seems to be lots of negative media against Northwest Territories user groups. Welcome Lance Nagwan to the Board. Heated discussion sometimes but that shouldn't be taken personally. Sometimes different thoughts on issues but at the end of the meeting, we leave all that at the table and continue to working together. Looking forward to next meeting.

Lance Nagwan: thanks to everyone for opening the doors to me with a warm welcome. This will be a big learning curve; looking forward to working with all Board members in the future.

Dorothy Cooley: no concerns. Welcome to Lance. Good three days of meeting at the AHM. Lots of ways these meetings could have gone. Parties were instrumental. It's encouraging to see Parties continue to want to work together and move forward with this. Good seeing everyone.

Marsha Branigan: welcome to Lance. Privilege for me to be on Board. Made good progress throughout the recent years. Still lots of work to do, but it was good. Give my support to Dorothy and roles she had to play at this meeting – she did a great job. Suggests thanking Alaska for being kind enough to release data to assist with the Board's decision-making process. The Board agreed.

Action 11-04: Board to send letter to Alaska Department of Fish and Game thanking them for their cooperation in making the preliminary photocensus results available for the AHM.

Joe Tetlich: welcome Lance to the Board, comes to table with management skills; from a very traditional family; learned lots from his grandpa; he will be valuable to the Board. David Frost is the alternate for Old Crow. We will pay for the cost of alternates attending an initial meeting. Thanks to Board members. Nice feeling to come to a Board meeting; tension could get high, but we laugh and have fun as we work through challenges.

International Porcupine Caribou Board

Mike Gill advised that Canada's members to the International Porcupine Caribou Board are confirmed. Government of Canada talked to US State Department in November, asking USFWS to coordinate the US nominations. Mike will try to get an update by next meeting to see if anything has changed.

Arctic Borderlands Gathering

Arctic Borderlands Gathering will be held March 19 and 20 in Fort McPherson, NWT. Members who may be interested in attending should let Secretariat know.

Next Meeting and Closing Prayer

The next meeting will be held on Mach 29 and 30, 2011, Whitehorse, Yukon.

The potential for a July meeting at Herschel Island will be explored.

Next agenda items will potentially include:

- Sale trade and barter – Marsha to review, compile comments.
- Communications in the Green Zone (wounding loss)
- Bear brochure
- Herd size estimator (Craig)
- CE update (Don Russell)
- Arctic Borderlands (Michael Svoboda)
- Implementation Plan update
- Harvest Monitoring Workshop
- Honoraria, and First Nation remuneration
- Budgeting for new fiscal year
- Harvest Management Plan processes, timelines
- Research Needs List

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m. and a closing prayer was offered by Joe Tetlich.