

Porcupine Caribou Management Board

Minutes of Meeting

March 29 and 30, 2011
Whitehorse, Yukon

In attendance

Members/Alternates

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Marsha Branigan, Government of the Northwest Territories
Kelly Milner, 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
David Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin (alternate)
Lance Nagwan, Vuntut Gwitchin (Day 2)

Dorothy Cooley, Government of Yukon (alternate and PCTC)
Jimmy Johnny, Nacho Nyak Dun (alternate)

Deana Lemke, Secretariat

Craig Nicolson (presenter by teleconference)
Don Russell (presenter by teleconference)

Welcome and Opening Prayer

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., offered the opening prayer and welcomed participants to the meeting, including newly appointed members and alternate members.

Review Agenda

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

Motion to accept agenda

Moved by Billy Storr

Seconded by Steven Buyck

Carried

Review Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the February 8 and 10, 2011 meeting were approved by the Board and the action items were reviewed and discussed.

Action 10-19 re Operating Procedures: deferred until the Roles and Responsibilities discussion has been concluded.

Action 10-22 re AHM submission template: Dorothy, Marsha, Mike and Steve to work on submission template for Board's review prior to next meeting.

Motion to accept Minutes of the February 8 and 10, 2011 meeting as distributed

Moved by Marsha Branigan

Seconded by Billy Storr

Carried

Chair's Update (Joe Tetlich)

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

- Photocensus results confirmed at 169,000 caribou.
- Attended Caribou Twinning Workshop in Inuvik in early March, hosted by CYFN.
- Attended Arctic Borderlands Gathering in Fort McPherson in March 19 and 20, 2011.

Administrative and Financial Report (Deana Lemke)

Secretariat provided an administrative report on activities since the last meeting.

- The Board's website has been updated.
- Annual Harvest Meeting report was finalized and sent to Parties March 10, 2011, providing them 30 days to reply. The report was released to the public March 25, uploaded to the website.
- Annual report for 2009-10 has been drafted and will be printed as soon as it has been finalized.
- Membership terms were reviewed. Parties will be reminded of expiring terms of members/alternates.
- The Chair's term will be expiring November 2011. A letter will be sent to all Parties six months prior to the termination date to invite nominations.
- Wolf Conservation Management Plan Review Committee is currently hosting public workshops throughout Yukon. A workshop will be held in Whitehorse on April 28.

The Board will be making a submission to the Wolf Conservation Management Plan Review Committee.

Finance

The Board appointed Michael McKay and Associates as the financial auditor for 2010-11.

Motion to appoint McKay and Associates as the financial auditor for the fiscal year 2010-11.

Moved by Mike Gill

Seconded by Marsha Branigan

Carried

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 Parks Canada agreement is currently being drafted. GNWT funding agreement has been signed for \$78,000. INAC funding agreement is being drafted, based on previous years' agreements. Government of Yukon funding agreement is in its final year of a multi-year agreement.

A financial update was provided for year-to-date expenditures and variance on budget. A proposed 2011-12 budget was also discussed.

Membership

The Board discussed the current honoraria rate for Board members and Chair in comparison to other similar boards. The Chair's rate is in the mid-range compared to other boards. The current Members' rate of \$200/day was considered in the low range. Therefore, the Board agreed to increase the Member rate to \$250/day effective immediately.

Motion to increase Board Members' honoraria rate to \$250/day effective immediately.

Moved by Marsha Branigan

Seconded by Steven Buyck

Carried

With respect to Board members who are employed by their First Nation government, it was agreed that the Board would cover travel/accommodation costs if those are not covered by the First Nation. Honoraria will also be provided if those Members are not compensated in terms of salary (e.g. PCMB meetings on weekends).

Updates

International Board Membership

Mike Gill advised that US State Department has been prompting the Fish and Wildlife Service to appoint their members to the International Board. The Canadian Embassy has been talking about this with the US State Department. There still is no word on progress.

PCMA Discussions

Mike Gill advised that Sherri Young has been discussing this with Mardy Semmler at Gwich'in Tribal Council regarding a meeting to discuss the PCMA. Gwich'in Tribal Council is taking the lead on organizing the meeting. The original signatories need to pass resolutions delegating authority to the appropriate First Nation and representatives.

Harvest Management Plan Implementation Plan

Apparently the IP encountered a few problems with signage; however, it has now been advanced to the federal government for signature and will then require both GNWT and Government of Yukon signatures.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board sent the Roles and Responsibilities summary to all Parties in January, for response by February 28, 2011. Responses have been received by Government of Yukon, GNWT, and CWS. The Board will send out another reminder to First Nations to respond. This will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Action 11-05: Secretariat to correspond with First Nations reminding them to respond.

Arctic Borderlands

The Arctic Borderlands Gathering was held March 19 and 20, 2011 in Fort McPherson. Joe Tetlich provided an overview of the meeting. Dorothy Cooley sits on the Board of Directors. Dorothy related that Borderlands has been working on the synthesis report for the past few years, analyzing what the gathered data indicates. Following up on his first report, Don Russell is working on a further caribou data report that links the caribou data to other data gathered outside of Borderlands interviews.

Another part of the synthesis is a full review of the survey questions. The new questionnaire is quite a bit shorter, taking less time to complete and making it more repeatable. The old database has been archived and a new database is being built to house information gathered with the new questionnaire. The new questionnaire was used this year but will be reviewed again this year to make

any improvements that the Monitors suggest. Therefore there is another opportunity for members to make comments.

Is there a specific list of answers to questions that the PCMB would like to have access to on a regular basis?

The Board will respond with suggestions – Marsha Branigan agreed to draft response based on the discussion.

Action 11-06: Marsha Branigan to draft response to Arctic Borderlands regarding its survey questionnaire.

Herd Update

Dorothy advised that the south Dempster check station still closed as there are still no caribou. Government of Yukon is still set to send the Conservation Officer up the Dempster if caribou show up.

Dorothy provided a draft of the new Counting the Caribou brochure. Any feedback from members on that brochure or the other recent brochures is welcome (Bear Safety for Dempster Caribou Hunters, Safe Camping for Dempster Caribou Hunters, Dempster Highway Caribou Hunting Best Practices).

Caribou Estimator

Craig Nicolson was in attendance by phone to provide an update on the Caribou Estimator computer model.

Craig provided a Powerpoint presentation for the Board's review, providing background information and an overview of the work completed to date on the new Herd Estimator model. The Herd Size Estimator is the tool to use for harvest management planning in years with no photocensus.

The new model provides a range of estimated population sizes and presents the uncertainty of the estimates more honestly and appropriately than the previous Caribou Calculator did. When the Caribou Calculator was originally developed, its purpose was to test “what if” scenarios about different harvest regimes, not for estimating herd size to manage harvest.

The further away we are from a photocensus, the less certainty there will be in the estimate from the Herd Size Estimator, and potentially the more risk associated with determining which zone the herd is in.

In April, the PCTC will review the Herd Size Estimator. The Board pointed out one element that is still missing from the Herd Size Estimator. We need to be able to adjust the sex ratio of the harvest in the model, and the resulting population estimate needs to show the estimated ratio of bulls and cows in the

herd so that we can see how the herd might react to different harvest management scenarios.

Once the Herd Size Estimator has been fully tested and reviewed, PCMB can start using a risk-assessment framework to evaluate future scenarios in harvest management planning. The Board will also need to do some public awareness and presentations to Parties about the model and its intended use to try to rebuild confidence in models.

Management Plan

Several years ago, the Board put revisions to its Management Plan on the backburner to deal with the Harvest Management Plan. There has been an Interim Plan in place (2003-05). The Board discussed the process for reviewing and updating the plan. The Board will discuss this further at the upcoming meeting, after it has an update on the status of the PCMA discussions. Then the Board can review and revise the plan as a workplan with recommended actions, identifying potentially responsible agencies.

Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines

The Board discussed the revised draft Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines and finalized them for distribution to the Parties and user communities.

Cumulative Effects Project

Don Russell connected to the meeting by phone and walked the Board through a Powerpoint presentation outlining the status of the Cumulative Effects project.

In February 2011, Shawn Francis ended his involvement with the CE project. PCMB asked Don Russell to put together a brief plan on how to proceed. At the Board's February meeting, Don suggested what the next steps should be and outlined a number of interim products that should be initiated. The Board agreed with the approach and contracted Don and Colin Daniel to work on a couple of the products. Don reported on two products:

Product 1: A retrospective analysis of climate trends in the PCH

During the Bathurst pilot project, climate played a bigger role in the productivity of the herd than present and future development scenarios. When we modeled impact of 1002 development on the PCH back in the 1990s, climate played as big a role as the full oil-development scenario. Therefore, it's important to understand how climate may impact the PCH in the future. One way is to see how climate is changing – are there trends or patterns that we should consider in our scenario development.

Using the CARMA climate database: Don began summarizing the past climate of the PCH using CARMA's climate database: 1979-2009. We can look at climate

variables to develop indicators for spring green-up, summer insects, summer drought, winter snow pack. These were summarized for three decades (1980s, 1990s, 2000s).

Product 2: A sub-model to easily run different scenarios

A first version of the full energy-protein model has been completed. The spreadsheet required to easily develop scenario datasheets has been completed. The new model has incorporated the best current knowledge of how caribou “make a living” under changing habitat conditions.

Summary of progress on the two products:

- Decadal averages for all relevant PCH habitat variables have been summarized.
- Work has begun on extracting trends or patterns on many variables.
- The procedure for relating any patterns to large-scale climate oscillations have been set (summer temperatures).
- Protein/energy model has been completed
- Spreadsheet to set up scenarios have been built

Suggested next steps/products:

- An analysis of climate trends and projected future trends needs to be completed
- Model validation – combining the energy-protein model with CARMA’s database to produce output to reflect typical climatic condition in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.
- Develop a brief report on how the model will be used to assess CE on the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Motion to allocate \$30,000 to the Cumulative Effects project headed by Don Russell (Shadow Lake Environmental Consulting) for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

Moved by Billy Storr

Seconded by Steven Buyck

Carried

Board Procedures

Decision-making and *in camera* discussions

The Board discussed the need for all members to be engaged following meetings, particularly in the decision-making and decision-drafting/approval process. If an alternate is at a meeting, correspondence that is distributed post-meeting will be copied to them. Their comments/feedback would then be channelled through their member to the Board.

Harvest Management Plan Update

Status of Board's Recommendations to Parties

The Board's recommendations were distributed March 10, 2011. Replies are due by April 11. Government of Yukon has submitted its response, accepting the Board's recommendations pertaining to the Green Zone. It has indicated its intention to rescind the Interim Measures regulation regarding subsistence harvesters that are not considered consistent with the Green Zone. No other responses have been received to date.

Review Timelines/Milestones outlined in HMP

The HMP timelines/milestones were reviewed, as outlined in the AHM Operating Procedures.

Communication in the Green Zone

Since we are moving from the Yellow Zone to the Green Zone, we need to make the messaging and communications consistent with the Green Zone. For example:

- Take only what you need
- Use all you take
- Precautionary approach
- Focus on a bull-dominated harvest (not bull only), along with reasoning
- Role of computer modelling

Communications in Green Zone need to be consistent with Board's recommendations. Communications group will get together to work on consistent messaging.

Members' Concerns

Each Board Member provided closing comments/concerns:

Steven Buyck: looking forward to Government of Yukon rescinding the interim measures and getting that sorted out.

Steve Taylor: land use planning for Dawson is happening; expect PCMB will provide us with information; a meeting schedule will be issued.

Billy Storr: always good to come to these meeting; good to work with this group; welcome to new members.

Dorothy Cooley: good to see everyone.

Kelly Milner: happy to be here with the Board; looking forward to working with everyone.

Liz Wright: glad to be able to come to meeting; thanks for encouraging us to make these meetings a priority; will update Sonny and the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

David Frost: very eye-opening; did lots of studying; glad to be working with everyone; glad that GY will be rescinding the interim regulation.

Lance Nagwan: good to see everyone; have good spring harvest.

Jimmy Johnny: glad to be here.

Marsha Branigan: good to see everyone here.

Mike Gill: welcome to new Board members. I wanted to raise the question of how many meetings are needed on an annual basis. Currently, the meetings we have had and the upcoming planned meetings total four in the first seven months of the year (January to July), and I assume we will have at least one or two more meetings (e.g. September and November) in the fall. I understood that PCMB had typically four meetings per year so would like to know whether we have enough work on our plates to justify up to six meetings in 2011.

Next Meeting and Closing Prayer

Board members will be canvassed for dates of availability for a conference call to discuss the responses to the AHM report.

A July meeting at Herschel Island will be further explored for July 11-14, 2011.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. and a closing prayer was offered by Steven Buyck.