

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

December 14 and 15, 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
David Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin

Deana Lemke, Secretariat

Stephen Charlie, Alternate, Government of the Northwest Territories
Roberta Joseph, Alternate, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
Dorothy Cooley, Government of Yukon (PCTC)
Don Russell (presenter, CE project)

Regrets

Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council
Gwich'in Tribal Council (no member/alternate currently appointed)

Welcome and Opening Prayer

The Chair, Joe Tetlich, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting, including those in attendance to observe the meeting. Steven Buyck offered an opening prayer.

The Chair acknowledged Gwich'in Tribal Council President Richard Nerysoo and Mardy Semmler, noting that there is not currently a Gwich'in Tribal Council member or alternate appointed to the PCMB. Joe acknowledged that they were in attendance as observers on behalf of GTC. The terms of appointment for their member and alternate expired at the end of November and there have not yet been new appointments made by GTC.

Richard Nerysoo spoke about the importance of the Board knowing what its role is. It does not replace the political parties or protect the rights of Gwich'in citizens. It is a management body for implementation of the Harvest Management

Plan, for example. The Parties agreed in 1992 that some revisions were required to the PCMA. Parties will need to follow up on this.

Richard noted that there will be an annual RRC meeting held in Inuvik on January 16, 2012.

Richard suggested there may be a role for the Board to assist with the development of Native User Agreements – perhaps assisting with providing a framework for a sample agreement.

Review Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed by the Board and approved.

***Motion to accept agenda
Moved by Mike Gill
Seconded by Kelly Milner
Carried***

Review Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the October 28 and 29, 2011 meeting were approved by the Board and the action items were reviewed and discussed.

***Motion to accept Minutes of the October 28 and 29, 2011 meeting as distributed
Moved by Mike Gill
Seconded by Steve Buyck
Carried***

Chair's Update (Joe Tetlich)

The Chair provided an update on activities since the last meeting in October. He attended an international wildlife symposium hosted by the Guide Outfitters Association of B.C. in Vancouver on December 8 and 9, 2011. It was entitled "Managing Wildlife in the Next Century", and included information related to the Harvest Management Plan.

Administrative and Financial Report (Deana Lemke)

Administration

The Secretariat provided an administrative report on activities since the last meeting:

- Letters were sent to Parties regarding the Chair appointment.
- The four new brochures were distributed to RRCs, HTC's and First Nations in our user communities. The brochures include: Dempster Highway Best Practices, Counting the Caribou, Safe Camping for Caribou Hunters, and Bear Safety for Caribou Hunters. They will be distributed in the coming weeks to the RRCs, HTC's and First Nations in our user communities.
- The PCMB/PCMA Roles and Responsibilities document was finalized, based on the revisions made at the last meeting. This will be distributed to Parties next week.
- Arrangements are being worked on for the HMP Annual Harvest Meeting in February. An invitation letter is being drafted, which will go to all Parties.
- Working on 2010-11 Annual Report draft, which will be sent to members to review in the near future.

Finance

The financial variance report was reviewed.

M. McKay and Associates was appointed as the auditor for the 2011-12 fiscal year. This auditor has been used for the last several years.

***Motion to appoint M. McKay and Associates as the auditor for 2011-12
Moved by Marsha Branigan
Seconded by Steve Taylor
Carried***

Meeting with Yukon Minister of Environment

Yukon Minister of Environment, Hon. Currie Dixon was in attendance. He was recently elected and has been getting up to speed on various issues. Following introductions, Joe Tetlichy highlighted some work that the Board has been involved in recently. Highlights of the discussion included:

- The Board is a non-political body. It doesn't replace the Parties to the PCMA. The Board makes recommendations and focuses on the long-term sustainability of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat.
- The Board has worked on the Harvest Management Plan and Implementation Plan.
- Traditional knowledge is brought forward by local experts in the communities. This is used to complement scientific knowledge.

- The Board is concerned about potential development within the habitat range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. It is working on a Cumulative Effects project that is anticipated to be used as a tool to inform decision making.
- The Board's focus is on educating people, rather than using regulations. The Board has an education component, for hunters and community members.
- The International Porcupine Caribou Board recently met in September – the first time in 10 years.

Minister Dixon shared his background experience and studies. He is not familiar with hunting or the northern communities, so he will rely on the experience of the Board and recommendations they bring forward. He assured that he will always have time to listen to the Board's issues or concerns.

Mike Gill pointed out that the Board works with Parties to coordinate conservation management activities of the herd. The Board is developing a new management plan and the Parties will play into that. We do have a lot of work ahead of us. The population is up currently but we don't presume that will always be the case, so we have to develop plans that will manage effectively.

Herd and Check Station Update

GNWT Update

Marsha Branigan stated that she has been working with Janet Boxwell, GRRB, on the harvest data reporting. The HMP highway signs are being worked on and will hopefully be up shortly.

Stephen Charlie said that there are liability concerns working with individuals operating firearms, in case they are injured during site-in-your rifle events. Waivers would be required, which stalled the process from moving forward. People aren't inclined to sign an extensive document. There was a sight-in-your-rifle event at Shingle Point (Yukon) hosted through a partnership between GNWT and Environment Yukon (EY).

Mardy Semmler said that Gwich'in Tribal Council has contribution agreement with GNWT to operate the check station on the Gwich'in side, through a service agreement with the Tetlit Gwich'in. It was operational for 10 weeks this year, until approximately mid-October. By then it was getting too cold to operate it. After it was closed, it seemed that was when the caribou arrived and hunters were out harvesting again. We are waiting on the harvest reports and will be able to provide that data to GNWT.

Stephen Charlie mentioned the work GNWT is doing with the Gwich'in. The beneficiaries are taking responsibility for the resources and delivery of the programs. This is a major accomplishment and the Gwich'in should be proud of

what they are doing there. We would like to see greater participation and involvement in the future.

Yukon Update

Dorothy Cooley provided an update as follows:

- HMP highway signs are updated with Green Zone message and may be going up this winter (possibly not until spring thaw). Permits will be required. The south check station has not been opened on the Dempster Highway. There are a few hunters coming up from the south end. Dawson Conservation Officers have been making patrols.
- There hasn't been any field work since the last PCMB meeting. Staff are preparing for the annual late winter field work in March 2012.
- USFW will be buying satellite GPS caribou collars which will give us more accurate locations than straight satellite collars. We are working with our IT folks to make sure we can bring in the new data.
- PCTC will need to prepare for next fiscal year's projects, keeping in mind that the Board will be renewing its Management Plan.
- Working with Arctic Borderlands and Don Russell on his continued analysis of the caribou data. A grad student is working on a project related to this.
- Arctic Borderlands is working on further refining its new interview questionnaire.

Contaminants Program

Mary Gamberg requested that the Board support a proposal to the Northern Contaminants Program. The Board reviewed the proposal and will provide comments by the January 16, 2012 deadline.

Proposed National Parks of Canada Wild Animals Regulations

The Board received an invitation from Parks Canada to provide comments on the proposed National Parks of Canada Wild Animals Regulations. The Board discussed the proposed regulations. Comments from the Board are not necessary.

Strategic Framework

Several years ago, the Board put making 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 going forward. An outline of a new Management Plan was drafted by Mike Gill, Steve Buyck and Kelly Milner.

The Management Plan is to be a platform to ensure the Board is prioritizing appropriate tasks and that those activities are aligned with the relevant

organizations and Parties. This framework should indicate what the priorities should be.

It was agreed that a five-year plan would be developed, consistent with the HMP. There needs to be deliverables and benchmarks identified which can be tracked and followed-up on. An annual review of the plan should be undertaken. On the third year, development of a subsequent five-year plan should begin.

It was agreed that the name “Management Plan” would be changed to “Strategic Framework” to alleviate any confusion between this plan and the Harvest Management Plan. The Board will write a letter to the Parties explaining the Strategic Framework revision process. Parties will be requested to communicate their top five priority areas to their respective Board member to bring back and inform the Board’s discussion. The letter should clarify the purpose and role of Strategic Framework so we get the right type of input. It also needs to clarify the difference between the Strategic Framework and the Harvest Management Plan.

The Strategic Framework should both outline what the Board is planning to do and coordinate the activities of other agencies and making sure the work is aligned.

A two-day Board meeting in May/June will be dedicated to developing the Strategic Framework. It was not decided whether the meeting should be facilitated by an outside facilitator or internally among the Board.

Action 11-11: ***Board to send letter to Parties regarding development of the Strategic Framework.***

Action 11-12: ***Board members will determine whether or not facilitation to update the Strategic Framework should be done in-house. If not, members will forward potential facilitator names to the Secretariat, for the Board’s consideration at a future date.***

Harvest Management Plan Update

Harvest Data Reporting

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

The Board discussed issues related to outstanding harvest data. Two parties have not submitted harvest data yet. Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in will be sending their data soon. Inuvialuit data is being collected in Aklavik (conducting interviews at the same time as RRC now).

Herd status report has not yet been completed but it will be finalized with the information that we have now.

The Board expects that it will have harvest information for the AHM. It won't be perfect but it's still better than what we've ever received before. We are in the Green Zone so we do have a bit of "wiggle room".

It is a challenge for some communities to gather their harvest data; however, it is encouraging that communities appear to be prepared to work with each other to report and compile the harvest data.

Annual Harvest Meeting

The Board reviewed the AHM components and expectations for the three days. The first day will be the open to the public and Parties, the second day will be a meeting of the Parties with the Board, and the third day will be a closed meeting of the Board to deliberate on the information. The Board is then required to make its recommendations within 30 days of the meeting.

The draft invitation letter/package will be revised based on the Board's discussion.

All Board members and alternates are encouraged to attend the AHM.

Cumulative Effects Project – Don Russell

Don Russell walked the Board through several PowerPoint presentations related to the Cumulative Effects project.

Plan for the day's discussion with Board

- Discuss what are the expectations of everyone
 - How we got here
 - How Board deals with development
 - How Board would like to deal with development
 - Applications, sign-off projects
- Discuss the components to a CE toolbox
 - RSF models
 - Energy-protein model (EP)
 - Climate as a component of CE
 - Caribou Estimator
- Latest application of EP model – the impact assessment of the Mary River Mine project, North Baffin Island
- Where do we go from here

CARMA discussion

- CARMA's goal to monitor and assess impacts of global change on caribou
- Major approach is cross-herd comparisons

- Need to compare (how herds and habitats are similar) and contrast (how herds and habitats are different)
- Climate plays a central role in controlling caribou abundance and distribution
- Ideal to have one source for the data – climate data

MERRA data

- Universal coverage for over the last 30 years
- Brings together all climate data within the satellite era
- Ensures that different satellites provide a consistent measure of the environment
- Data at least daily and, for example, temperature every three hours
- 72 variables offered
- Grid size ½ degree latitude by 2/3 degree longitude
- Data is available to download within months
- Estimate for CARMA to provide annual updates is approximately 18 hours, of which 15 hours is MERRA data download

The CARMA climate database and global oscillations – is there a relationship between average monthly temperature values for three global oscillations: Arctic Oscillation, North Atlantic Oscillation, and Pacific Oscillation.

Products for the Board

- Retrospective analysis of climatic conditions in the Porcupine Caribou Herd range
- Similar analysis but compared to adjacent herds
- Assess typical climatic conditions in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s
- Identification of where the PCH shows the greatest difference from inter-herd mean
- What is the role of global climate oscillations
- Climate and how it relates to location of caribou (and trends?)

Resource Selection Functions (RSF) – A Primer (Chris Johnson)

Introduction to RSFs:

1. What is a Resource Selection Function?
 - RSF is a type of statistical model – a type of *species distribution model*
 - Non-random patterns of distribution suggest *selection or avoidance* of habitats/resources/disturbance
2. What will an RSF tell us?
 - Statistically defensible relationship between distribution of population and environmental features: *weighting coefficients*
 - Maps of habitats likely to be used by the population

How to proceed with RSF:

- Chris Johnson has some time available before the fiscal new year to analyze the vegetation map, footprint map, and caribou satellite locations

Marsha suggested that seismic lines in the taiga vs tundra could be considered.

Is there avoidance of seismic lines in the Eagle Plains area?

Is there avoidance of the Dempster in deep- and average-snow years?

- Products for the Board
 - Assess habitat use of the PCH on a seasonal basis
 - Assess implications of climate change on the habitat use of the PCH

Don discussed the energy-protein model and how to track key indicators similar to the Baffin Island application. There should be a mathematical link to calf survival, cow survival, pregnancy rate and the age of first reproduction. If we use these estimates of productivity in the population model we could have a direct link from the CE project to the HMS. Don mentioned that the status of the Caribou Estimator computer tool is currently unknown as Craig Nicolson has not been available recently.

There was discussion about the use of the caribou calculator in the past and how we need to look at a variety of tools to inform decision making. A revised caribou estimator will be a valuable tool for this purpose.

Products for the Board:

- Link energy-protein model to caribou estimator
 - From model output or from collapsing EP model output so simply need climate data
 - Look into the future with climate projections
- Develop tools to assess CE on the PCH population dynamics
- Assess how to monitor and manage population dynamics through the cycle
- Assess how climate change and development will impact those management decisions

The Board expressed that some preliminary products will be very useful to the Board, and the caribou estimator will be a good tool for the Board. The Baffin Island application is a good example on how it can be used to assess a project. There is a lot of work to do to get the Parties to adopt this, however.

Kelly Milner said that a broader conversation with the ones looking at cumulative effects in Government of Yukon, corporately, would be useful, as well as the Yukon Development Assessment Board.

Don responded that CE from a landscape perspective and CE from a specific species perspective are two very different lines of thought.

Kelly added that the sooner we can start opening up this discussion, the better.

There was discussion about exploring having a master's student involved in doing the RSF work, as this could bring in an element of academic rigor to the project. The Board supported this concept.

Action 11-13: ***Secretariat to check files to see if the Board has corresponded with Parties about the CE project. The Board should send a letter to Parties exploring interest and potential support options.***

Action 11-14: ***Kelly Milner to have a discussion with Environment Yukon and other GY departments that may be looking at CE work within the government.***

The Board would like Don to continue his work on the CE project, specifically focusing on the following:

- Developing a package of indicators using the MERRA data
- Doing the RSF (Chris Johnson) Dempster and Eagle Plains
- Meeting with Parties to explain the CE project and potential partnering opportunities
- Continuing to work on model

Motion to reallocate \$10K from HMS to the CE project
Moved by Marsha Branigan
Seconded by Kelly Milner
Carried

Native User Agreements

The Board discussed the status of work on the Native User Agreements, in accordance with the HMP. The Board will send out a letter reminding Parties of the tasks they agreed to undertake related to the development of the Native User Agreements by August 31, 2011. Letters should be addressed to the two lead Parties identified, copied to other involved Parties listed.

Action ***Board to send letters to Parties responsible for development of the Native User Agreements, asking for status of the work undertaken.***

Members' Concerns

Each Board Member provided closing comments/concerns:

David Frost: will be getting back to Vuntut Gwitchin Lands with meeting information.

Steve Buyck: very interesting meeting, especially around CE project.

Steve Taylor: land use planning is happening in the Dawson area. LUP commissioners are concerned that governments aren't taking appropriate action to approve Peel Land Use Plan. They are questioning their work and their involvement. There are elements in the plan that deal with protection of the herd, so this should be a concern to the PCMB. Good meeting, pleasure attending; wish everyone safe travels home.

Steven Charlie: thanks to everyone; learned a lot. Great group, good work being done; good leadership here. The communities look to the Board for guidance; appreciate being part of the Board.

Joe Tetlich: thanks to everyone for coming. Good that Gwich'in Tribal Council had a presence here with their President and Director in attendance. Still some challenges communicating with communities, especially re Harvest Management Plan. Many other groups are looking to the Board and how things are turning out with the Harvest Management Plan. Safe travels home to everyone.

Mardy Semmler mentioned that the Gwich'in Tribal Council is putting out calls for nominations for PCMB members. They intend to have a member appointed before the Annual Harvest Meeting.

Next Meetings and Closing Prayer

The Annual Harvest Meeting is scheduled for February 7-9, 2012, in Dawson City, Yukon.

The next Board meeting will be held March 27 and 28, 2012. The agenda will include:

- Debrief on AHM
- Update on CE project and future planning
- Strategic Framework planning
- Board Operating Procedures

Upcoming meetings

- Regional RRC meeting
- GRRB meeting January 19 and 20 (Marsha will attend to give a PCMB update)

- Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op will be holding its Annual Gathering. The date and location has not yet been confirmed.
- International Porcupine Caribou Board meeting is scheduled for April 16-20, 2012 in Fairbanks, AK. Joe will attend as an IPCB member. The Board agreed that it would be beneficial for Deana to attend as well if she is available.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m. and a closing prayer was offered by Steven Buyck.