

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

July 8 and 9, 2013
Inuvik, NT

In attendance

Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Steven Buyck, Nacho Ny'ak Dun
Torrie Hunter, Government of Yukon (Alternate)
Chris Hunter, Government of Canada (Alternate)
Marsha Branigan, Government of the Northwest Territories
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council
David Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (Alternate)
Art Christiansen, Trondek Hwech'in
Wilbert Firth, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Roberta Joseph, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (Alternate)
Stephen Charlie, GNWT (Alternate)

Deana Lemke, Executive Director
Andrew Sheriff, PCMB summer student

Presenters

Dorothy Cooley, Environment Yukon
Dawna Hope, Environment Yukon
Mike Gill, Canadian Wildlife Service
Caleb Behn, Member of the Dene Nation, Northern B.C.

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Chair Joe Tetlich called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. Steven Buyck offered an opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Norman Snowshoe, Vice-President of GTC welcomed the Board members to Inuvik and the Gwich'in Settlement Area. He stated that the PCMB has done good work over the years. It is great to see a healthy caribou population. There have been concerns raised by RRCs regarding harvesting. Every year the caribou behaves differently. Last year, there was a portion of the caribou around the border early in the year but for the remainder of the year there was no caribou available to many communities, so harvesting was affected. For Old Crow harvesters, it was a good year since there was greater access to the

caribou for harvesting. There have been concerns raised with respect to not allowing the caribou leaders to pass when they arrive on the Dempster. GTC feels this should be respected as a tradition. GTC is well-aware of issues on the table and they are being managed as best as possible. GTC is supportive of good management as prescribed by its land claim agreement.

Review Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed by the Board and approved.

Motion to accept agenda
Moved by Art Christiansen
Seconded by Billy Storr
Carried

Review Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the March 4, 2013 meeting were approved by the Board and the action items were reviewed and discussed.

Motion to accept Minutes of the March 4, 2013 meeting as distributed
Moved by Torrie Hunter
Seconded by Billy Storr
Carried

Chair's Report

Chair Joe Tetlichy related that he travelled to Old Crow to participate in Big Caribou Days; he provided a presentation with regard to Board activities and distributed promotional/educational items. There were concerns expressed about wolves up river from Old Crow and the desire to explore ways to deal with the wolf issue. Caribou harvest sharing was also discussed to address situations where some PCH communities have greater access to caribou than others and what could be done to offset the hardship.

Administrative and Financial Report

Financial update

Executive Director Deana Lemke provided an administrative and financial report. The variance report was reviewed. The 2013-14 budget was revised slightly to include a line item for the summer student employee (Johnny Charlie scholarship), and a small allocation for the CE project (\$5,000). The final variance report for 2012-13 was reviewed. The financial audit is almost complete for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Copies of the audit will be provided to the funding agencies once it has been completed. The funding agreements for this fiscal year have all been put in place.

Administrative update

Board member terms of appointment were discussed.

- Terms for VGG's member and alternate expired in January. Marsha Branigan's (GNWT) term is expiring in August.
- TH's appointment of Art Christiansen's appointment needs to be formalized by TH and GY.
- Chris Hunter advised that he is currently the alternate for Government of Canada since Molly Kirk is now on leave.

The draft Annual Reports for 2010-11 and 2012-13 were provided to members for final review. Any suggestions for revisions should be provided to the Executive Director by the end of the week. Then the reports will be printed and uploaded to the Board's website for public access.

Recent correspondence was provided in members' meeting information binders.

- The Board's Cumulative Effects project letter will be revised to include a new product that has been completed by Don Russell.
- It was agreed that the letter from the Ehdiitat RRC received July 5, 2013 will be discussed by the Board on day two of this meeting.
- Kiri Staples is asking for co-management board members' participation in a survey regarding if/how gender affects co-management bodies' decision-making. Mike Gill participated in the study and recommended that other members reconsider and participate because he sees value in this project.

Herd Update

Government of Yukon

Torrie Hunter reviewed the written Herd Update provided by Mike Sutor and Martin Keinzler, who were unable to be in attendance at this meeting. Copies of the written report were provided in members' meeting information binders.

A photocensus has been attempted this year but without success due to weather conditions and caribou location challenges, including the fact that several bulls have split off from the herd (they are currently in the Richardson Mountains). There will still be an opportunity over the next few days to further attempt the photocensus.

Northwest Territories

Marsha Branigan stated that check station preparations are underway to get the mobile trailer on the north end of the Dempster Highway. A funding agreement has been put in place between ENR and GTC, and GTC is working with the TRRC to put staff in place.

NWT resident harvest data was submitted to the Board.

ENR is working with the Aklavik HTC to do the door-to-door harvest study.

ENR is continuing with its CSI sampling program this year. The amount provided to hunters for each sample has been increased from \$25 to \$50.

ENR has provided support to Martin Keinzler's for the photo survey work. They were ready to fly this weekend to photograph bulls on the Richardson Mountains, but that didn't transpire. ENR is still willing to provide support as needed.

Snow depth data has been worked up and will be available for the next AHM report.

Grizzly Bear presentation

Mike Gill joined the meeting by conference call to discuss the proposed listing of Grizzly Bear on the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The Board has until October 4 to provide comments and feedback regarding the proposed listing. Mike reviewed a Powerpoint presentation (slides provided) and spoke about SARA and the "Listing" process, an overview of the Grizzly Bear range, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada's (COSEWIC's) assessment, and the implications of listing Grizzly Bear as "Special Concern." A graphic was provided to outline the SARA cycle showing the assessment, listing, recovery planning and implementation process.

Prior to having the SARA legislation, COSEWIC assessed Grizzly Bear in 1979 and determined it was not at risk. In 1991, it was considered "Special Concern; in 2002 it was still considered "Special Concern". It was again considered "Special Concern" in 2012. This is the first time an assessment has been done since SARA has been implemented (2003). COSEWIC has made this designation due to the following:

- Global distribution declined over 50 percent since 1800s
- Western Canada is the core of the remaining range
- Highly sensitive to human disturbance
- High mortality risk in areas of human activity and roads

Threats include:

- Increased road access in previously inaccessible areas resulting in increased mortality risk

- Poaching, accidental killing, nuisance/self-defence killing
- Loss of fragmentation of habitat

Why the designation is considered “Special Concern”:

- Poor condition in southern part of the range (Alberta and southern BC)
- Naturally low reproductive rates
- Increased pressure from resource extraction and cumulative impacts in intact parts of range
- Concerns about unsustainable mortality in Alberta, BC and parts of Yukon

Implications of “Special Concern” listing:

- Species sensitive to human activities or natural events (but not yet endangered or threatened)
- May become threatened if factors not reversed or managed
- Goal is to prevent the species from becoming further endangered
- There are no SARA prohibitions
- Management Plan must be developed which describes measures for conservation of species
- No critical habitat is identified
- Prepared in cooperation with aboriginal organizations, wildlife management boards and other affected parties

Billy Storr mentioned that in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), Grizzly Bear are harvested. If the quota is being increased on Grizzly Bear, why would we support “Special Concern” listing of that species? Billy feels that Grizzly Bear have the ability to adapt and survive in various conditions.

Mike responded that the proposed listing would not impact Grizzly Bear management within the ISR as management bodies oversee that species’ management. In some areas of the range, the Grizzly Bear populations are not doing as well as in some others.

Art Christiansen asked why the Grizzly Bear are moving north. Mike responded that he is not an expert but there is some indication that the warming climate has facilitated their ability to move into areas that were formerly off limit to them. Marsha Branigan added that people don’t really know why Grizzly Bear are moving north. It could be because population numbers are rising and ranges are expanding. Mike agreed that distribution of a species is not static.

Roberta Joseph asked where the studies and assessments can be found regarding the migration patterns of Grizzly Bear in South America. Mike responded that he will send a link to the COSEWIC report which includes links to its sources (reports, research, etc.).

Joe Tetlich mentioned that there may be a conflict with how Grizzly Bear are managed on the Dempster Highway — for example, due to safety issues, and

the proposed listing of “Species of Concern”. Mike responded that nuance is important and this may be a communication challenge. It is not ignored that in some parts of the range Grizzly Bear are doing well; however, in other parts, they are not, and might need to be monitored. Joe added that a balanced approach is important.

Billy said there is a Grizzly Bear management plan in place that should be considered.

Art added that there is a noticeable increase in Grizzly Bear on the Dempster Highway. Roberta agreed and added that it’s not only a safety concern but there is also a related increase of caribou predation because of increased Grizzly Bear population.

Roberta asked if there is there any collaring data showing a movement in migratory range. Mike responded that there is collaring, but it doesn’t exist historically south of northern Mexico. We are looking within populations and movement on an annual basis. Not sure how much data has been derived from collaring that shows migration or expansion information. Marsha agreed, and added that another problem is that it is thought that migratory changes happen by sub-adults; however, sub-adults are not collared.

SARA deals with species within Canada. Mike also explained how “designatable units” are identified and dealt with.

Mike stated that all COSEWIC listings must go to co-management boards for input. The PCMB should be providing feedback in relation to its mandate; however, members’ feedback should not be constrained as it will be considered valid. Clear communication back to the communities will be important. Members thanked Mike for his presentation on behalf of CWS.

Chris Hunter suggested that the Board may want to ask Mike for examples of other species that have been designated “Special Concern” when they have healthier populations in some places but lower populations elsewhere in their range. Mike responded with the example of the Northern Mountain Population of Woodland Caribou which is listed as Special Concern. This listing has not resulted in blanket conservation actions for all herds but has helped to prioritize conservation actions to only those herds that are struggling. He said we expect a similar, nuanced, approach with Grizzly Bear.

Action 13-04: The Board will submit a reply regarding the proposed SARA listing of Grizzly Bear by the October 4, 2013 deadline. A draft will be prepared and distributed to Board members for review.

Satellite collar location data request

The Board received a request from the Ehdiiat RRC July 5, 2013 to receive caribou satellite collar location data.

Billy Storr said that having the data in the communities even a month later would be helpful.

The Board reviewed its February 20, 2007 letter to GY regarding its resolution made in November 2006 about conservation of the herd, requesting the satellite collar program to stop reporting the caribou locations with the exception of the seasonal information, which has an educational value.

Some members noted that there is currently no caribou conservation concern, so this position should be revisited by the Board

Costs have increased for community members to travel to harvest caribou, with limited or no success in recent months. Having the location information would help harvesters be more efficient and effective in their hunting efforts.

Communities should be looking at caribou-sharing arrangements so the communities with limited harvesting opportunities can be considered when there is limited or no caribou availability.

It was suggested that the location data release revert back to the two-week delay. Consideration must also be given to the fact that the work to actually maintain the program with this frequency of updates is significant work for the regional biologists who are responsible for the program.

The International Porcupine Caribou Board may also want to consider this matter.

Dorothy Cooley noted that the satellite data information has always been considered to be co-owned as it involves participants and resources from various agencies.

It was suggested that the location data could be released at a level consistent with the various HMP colour zones.

The Board agreed to send a letter to the PCTC advising that the Board does not consider the population of the PCH to be a conservation concern. The Board will advise that co-management partners are asking for the location information from the satellite data and that the Board proposes that the PCTC develop guidelines for release of the location maps (not the actual data) — suggesting it be linked to the HMP colour zones, timing for a delayed release, and who should be on the distribution list. PCMB would like to review the guidelines drafted by the PCTC

and have an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft. Copy of letter should be sent to the International Porcupine Caribou Board.

Action 13-05: ***Send letter to PCTC advising that the Board does not consider the population of the PCH to be a conservation concern, propose PCTC develop guidelines for release of caribou location maps.***

Action 13-06: ***Acknowledge receipt of Ehdiiitat RRC letter, explaining that the PCMB doesn't hold the satellite collar data and that the PCMB will be recommending that the PCTC develop guidelines regarding the release of the location data.***

PCTC Terms of Reference

The Board discussed the draft Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee (PCTC) Terms of Reference. Concerns were raised regarding the membership of the PCTC as outlined in the terms of reference, specifically that membership doesn't explicitly include PCMB. In addition, since the PCTC is a key body with responsibilities under the HMP Implementation Plan, the Board feels the linkage between the PCTC and the PCMB should be formalized and more direct. The Board will raise these concerns with the International Porcupine Caribou Board (IPCB) prior to its upcoming meeting scheduled for September, at which meeting the IPCB is expected to adopt the PCTC Terms of Reference.

Action 13-07: ***Contact IPCB Co-Chair to set up meeting to discuss how to raise concerns regarding the PCTC draft Terms of Reference.***

Dempster Highway hunting regulations

The Board discussed the status of its recommendations regarding the Dempster Highway hunting regulation changes.

GNWT will be consulting with its management partners. GY has referred the recommendations to the YFWMB for consultation. PCMB will discuss with EY whether or not the Board should be listed as a co-proponent and how it will work with YFWMB respecting the public consultation.

The Board will discuss the minister's letter at the next Board meeting.

Action 13-08: ***Ensure PCMA parties are sent copies of the two responses from the government ministers and the GTC.***

NWT Wildlife Act

Stephen Charlie related that revisions to the NWT *Wildlife Act* have become a priority for its current government. Last year, there was a public consultation schedule released. First Nations' rights and authorities will be acknowledged to a greater degree in the legislative revisions. First Nations will have a greater say with respect to wildlife management and enforcement on their lands. Third reading of the revised legislation is expected shortly. If the legislation passes, regulations will take approximately one year to develop. A "conference of management authorities" will be established to bring together all NWT aboriginal groups with and without land claim agreements. The new legislation will support responsible hunting practices, hunter education and sustainable harvest.

Harvest Data Program Update

Historic Data Report

Dorothy Cooley related that harvest data has been received from GY and GNWT. On July 15, the FN and Inuvialuit harvest data reports are due.

The harvest database is still being worked on with a contractor. A workshop was held with the user communities to determine what community and administrator needs were. The contractor has competing commitments but it is hoped that he will complete the database this month.

Historic Data Report

Dawna Hope related that all available historical harvest data has been received from organizations. A report should be available prior to the next Board meeting. We have Inuvialuit and NWT Gwich'in, and the YFN harvest study from 1987-1994. Otherwise, the First Nation harvest data will be missing as it does not exist.

Population model update

Troy Hegel provided a written update which was related by Dorothy Cooley. Troy has been working with another contractor in Alaska as the original contractor, Craig Nicolson, has not been available. The model continues to be in Excel as it seems to work in that program and that format will be easier for others to use.

The contractor has run the model and determined that the 2012 population is estimated to be 172,254 animals. As we get better harvest data, the population model will be more accurate. Arctic Borderlands data will also be considered as an input to the model. The model should be ready to utilize at the next Annual Harvest Meeting.

The PCTC has not yet reviewed the model. This will hopefully be done prior to the Board's fall meeting. It was suggested that Troy could come to the Board meeting to present the model at that time.

Chris Hunter reminded the Board about Government of Canada's commitment to do an independent review of the harvest data. If we get the database finalized and installed, that should address the issues arising regarding the data collection program. We are to estimate a reliability of the harvest data, and this should be addressed with the database.

Roberta said there will be a transition in the TH fish and wildlife staff and they may need to be briefed regarding the HMP. The Board Chair and Executive Director can assist, but it is more appropriate for the respective parties to ensure their staff members are up to speed with the commitments and expectations.

Steven Buyck related that NND discussed the computer model and recognizes that it was only to be used as a resource tool; accurate and complete harvest data is critical. Environmental indicators should also be taken into consideration as they can have significant impacts on the herd.

Action 13-09: Dorothy Cooley agreed to email TH, VGG and NND to request whatever historical harvest data they have so it can be included in the report that Dawna Hope is preparing.

PCMB summer student

PCMB summer student, Andrew Sheriff, presented information about his work with the PCMB so far this summer, under the supervision of Mike Sutor, Regional Biologist in Dawson City. His three major areas of focus were caribou ecology, GIS and spatial information, and integrated management. Activities that assisted with developing his interests were:

- participating in North Slope calving survey flights and telemetry flights in June to locate collared animals that were missing (14 out of 20 missing collars were located). Several large groups of caribou were observed in the Richardson Mountains.
- researching linear disturbances in response to 3D seismic survey proposal as well as working with GIS and spatial data related to PCH movement patterns
- attending FCH meeting involving integrated management, experiencing the intersection of science and management related to PCH

Andrew also worked on an independent project using densities from telemetry data as a method of sampling caribou habitat. The project attempts to address issues related to the extensive range of the herd and the low amounts of habitat data. Andrew stated that it was a great opportunity to learn firsthand how managers deal with a complex and wide-ranging species and that his experience has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him.

Harvest Management Plan update

HMP Milestones calendar

The HMP Milestones chart was reviewed. Harvest data was received from GY and GNWT; harvest data from parties is due by July 15. A reminder was emailed to Parties regarding the deadline. Members were reminded that if parties do not meet specific timelines set, as committed to in the HMP Implementation Plan, it affects other deliverables and timelines. Therefore, members agreed to remind their respective parties about the need to meet deadlines and that their harvest data reports are due July 15. A HMP Communications Working Group meeting will be scheduled in the next few weeks so that any materials can be developed and distributed prior to the upcoming harvest season.

Action 13-10: *Members to remind their respective parties about the need to meet deadlines and that their harvest data reports are due July 15.*

Status of AHM recommendations

Responses to the Annual Harvest Meeting recommendations from the PCMB were due from the Parties by March 27, 2013. Replies have been received from TH, YG, GNWT and GC. Still outstanding are replies from NND, VGG, IGC and GTC. Members will check with their respective parties regarding the status of the replies, as committed to in the HMP Implementation Plan.

Action 13-11: *Members will check with their respective parties regarding the status of their replies to the Board's AHM recommendations, as committed to in the HMP Implementation Plan.*

YFWMB/PCMB memorandum of understanding

The draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the PCMB was discussed. A few additional revisions were suggested. Some members prefer to have their parties review the draft MOU. If members have any revisions to the draft, they are to provide suggested changes to the Executive Director by July 31.

Action 13-12: *Any revisions to the draft YFWMB/PCMB MOU to be related to the Executive Director by July 31, 2013.*

Hydraulic fracturing

Caleb Behn was invited to the meeting to present information related to his experience with hydraulic fracturing around his home community in Northern B.C. His presentation was entitled "Fracking in Denendeh: Indigenous People and Unconventional Energy in Northeastern British Columbia". His primary areas of concern related to hydraulic fracturing include:

- Linear disturbances (roads, pipelines and well-pads)
- Pollution from development (noise, weeds, erosion, run-off, dust, carcinogens and CO₂)
- Interference with First Nation land use (safety and security issues)
- Water
 - Contamination (gas, heavy metals, minerals, radioactive compounds and chemicals)
 - Disposal (injection cheaper than remediation)
 - Massive extraction (up to 600 Olympic swimming pools of water per fracture)
- Earthquakes (increased localized seismicity of major concern to First Nation elders)
- Community impacts (foreign workers, violence, substance abuse, cost of living increases)
- The rapid growth of the oil and gas industry has outpaced our understanding of possible health and safety impacts on communities

Strategic Framework

The Board discussed the final Strategic Framework document as distributed to all stakeholders. The annual workplan was discussed.

- Board communication plan needs to be revised. The Executive Director will seek an estimate for Kelly Milner to revise the communication plan and present a proposal/estimate at the next Board meeting.
- The Board discussed the suggestion to look into the cost to produce a wall calendar or pocket calendar that can be used for recording harvest, and that includes reminders regarding harvesting, hunter safety, etc. This can be discussed further during the revision of the communication plan.
- It was suggested that a spreadsheet to track Strategic Framework actions would be helpful, especially if it can be reviewed routinely at each Board meeting.

Members' closing comments

Steve Buyck: need to get Native User Agreement worked on; harvest data needs to be submitted per schedule.

Torrie Hunter: Jamie McLennan will be appointed as YG member soon.

David Frost: VGG's F&W monitor has resigned, as well as the Director, so the FN will be looking at hiring new staff, and a new PCMB member will be appointed

Chris Hunter: if Mike Gill is not able to participate in September meeting, will look at possibly attending as alternate, unless another alternate is appointed.

Roberta: good meeting; need to get moving with the Native User Agreement development.

Art Christiansen: good to work with the board; can see that trust has been built over the past few years since I was last at the table

Joe Tetlich: important to ensure good and frequent communication between members and the Executive Director.

Next Meeting and Closing Prayer

The next PCMB meeting will be scheduled on Sept. 19, to follow the IPCB meeting in Dawson (Sept. 17 and 18). The subsequent meeting is scheduled for Whitehorse, Yukon on December 19 and 20, 2013.

IGC will be meeting in Whitehorse, Yukon September 26-29, 2013.

IPCB meeting will be in Dawson Sept. 17 and 18, 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m. and a closing prayer was offered by Steven Buyck.