

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting May 15 and 16, 2015 Old Crow, Yukon

In attendance

Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair
David Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
Steven Buyck, Nacho Ny'ak Dun
Jamie McLelland, Government of Yukon
Art Christiansen, Trondek Hwech'in
Ian McDonald, Government of Canada
Marsha Branigan, Government of the Northwest Territories
Wilbert Firth, Gwich'in Tribal Council

Deana Lemke, Executive Director

Regret

Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council

Presenters

Mike Sutor, Environment Yukon
Kelly Milner, Communications Consultant

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Chair Joe Tetlich welcomed members to the meeting and called the meeting to order on May 15 at 1:45 p.m., after which he offered an opening prayer.

Review Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed by the Board and approved as distributed. Joe noted the Board's appreciation for being invited to participate in Caribou Days in Old Crow. Members expressed that they looked forward to fully participating in community activities over the next three days. The PCMB also volunteered to host a community barbecue during the Caribou Days celebration.

***Motion to accept agenda
Moved by Jamie McLelland
Seconded by Marsha Branigan
Carried***

Review Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the February 10, 2015 meeting were approved by the Board.

***Motion to approve Minutes of the February 10, 2015 meeting, as distributed
Moved by Marsha Branigan
Seconded by Jamie McLelland
Carried***

Chair's Report

Chair Joe Tetlichy provided an update as follows:

- Joe attended the Tanana chiefs conference in Fairbanks, Alaska in March. There are approximately 40 chiefs and the group functions somewhat like the Council of Yukon First Nations. Attending the conference was a good way to introduce the chiefs in Alaska to the PCMB. Joe had good discussions with chiefs from Porcupine caribou user communities. Arctic Village and Venetie depend significantly on caribou, while Fort Yukon only harvests caribou occasionally.
- The chiefs think highly of the PCMB and would like to see a similar arrangement in Alaska. Currently they feel they have minimum input or involvement in decisions related to caribou management in Alaska. They would like PCMB to come back and present the HMP to their communities.
- Joe is getting a lot of inquiries from PCH community members about where the caribou are; there has been a general lack of caribou harvest this year.

Administrative and Financial Report

Executive Director Deana Lemke provided an administrative and financial report. Deana and Kelly Milner attended the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) [WMAC (NS)] meeting while Joe Tetlichy was in Alaska at the Tanana chiefs meeting. WMAC (NS) expressed an interest in having a more solid connection with PCMB. Even though, lately, they seem to be working primarily on polar bear-related issues, their mandate also includes Porcupine caribou.

Deana shared concerns with WMAC (NS) about IGC's challenges collecting harvest data and the subsequent communications between PCMB and IGC related to these challenges. WMAC (NS) expressed concern about this situation. They would like to see the Joint Secretariat responsible for harvest reporting so that they manage it in a consistent and uniformed manner.

WMAC (NS) made positive comments about PCMB's work on the cumulative effects project, the updating of the *Sensitive Habitats* report, and PCMB's ongoing work and communication efforts. They would like to be kept informed about data collection issues and challenges.

Correspondence

- 1) Letter from Tetlit Gwich'in RRC dated May 7, 2015, regarding safe and respectful harvesting of Porcupine Caribou, signage, and permissions was reviewed. The Board will acknowledge the letter and suggest that the issues be dealt with by GTC and the GRRB.

Action 15-01: Chair to reply to Tetlit Gwich'in RRC regarding their May 7, 2015 correspondence to PCMB.

- 2) Letter from WMAC (NS) dated April 16, 2015 regarding PCH distribution and user community access to harvest opportunities was reviewed and discussed. One of the concerns mentioned in the letter was the potential of North Slope muskoxen to affect the distribution of the PCH.

The Board members felt that if harvesters' needs were being met with a caribou harvest, the muskox would not be a concern. It was agreed that solutions to the concerns outlined in the letter are beyond the scope of PCMB and that this is primarily an education-related issue. Some members felt that it may be advisable to ask the PCTC for data and information regarding caribou and muskox interactions and to support a collaborative workshop.

Action 15-02: Chair to reply to WMAC (NS) regarding muskox/caribou interaction issue and potential collaborative workshop.

- 3) Letter from Northwest Territories Species at Risk Committee, dated April 9, 2015, regarding a review of the draft report on the status of Barren-Ground Caribou in NWT was reviewed. Jamie will find out if someone at EY will be reviewing it. Due to the large size of the report, Deana will send a link via email to Board members.

Action 15-03: Executive Director to forward SARA information to members to review and comment on by the end of June.

- 4) Letter from NWT Environment and Natural Resources, dated April 9, 2015, regarding the rescinding of the Dempster Highway Special Management Area and Regulations was discussed. Jamie noted that the Order-in-council respecting the let-the-leaders-pass regulation has been signed, and two proposals were put forward this spring regarding regulation changes. One is related to changing the emergency closure process to protect Hart River caribou and the other is an adaptive regulation change allowing the Minister to change the harvest limit for licensed hunters to one caribou if the need arises.

Referring to the MOU between PCMB and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board (YFWMB), Joe noted that the correspondence on this matter should have come to PCMB first, since the PCMB should take the lead on matters that pertain to the PCH.

Action 15-04: Jamie McLelland will provide the two regulation change proposals to the Board for review. Then it will be determined how to proceed with the public-engagement process, in conjunction with the intent of the MOU with the YFWMB.

- 5) It was noted that responses from to the AHM recommendations have only been received from the governments of Yukon, NWT, and Canada. Joe noted that communication from Board members to their First Nation governments is important in order to solicit a response from their respective First Nations. Deana noted that she has spoken with the new F&W staff person at Tr'ondek Hwech'in who will follow up regarding a reply.

Financial update

Deana provided a draft 2015-16 budget for review. She noted that the Harvest Management line item was being used as a placeholder to fund work and initiatives related to Native User Agreements. Due to some recent work and communication on Native User Agreements, it is hopeful that some progress will be made this year.

Don Russell is currently doing work on populating a database related to the cumulative effects project. Until he provides cost information, the amount required for the budget will not be confirmed. The allocated communication budget is to accommodate initiatives that have already been discussed and agreed upon during previous meetings.

***Motion to accept the draft budget for 2015-16 as distributed
Moved by Jamie McLelland
Seconded by Ian McDonald
Carried***

Herd Update

Government of Yukon Update

Mike Suitor provided the following update to the Board members:

- Winter work, including a telemetry flight to confirm the distribution of the PCH, was completed.
- The Alaskans did all of the capture work this year because the herd was on their side of the border. Funding was sent to them to do the work on Canada's behalf.

- In addition to the usual capture work, 30 new satellite collars were deployed.
- Seven additional collars were placed on Porcupine caribou because of overlap with the Central Arctic Herd.
- BBC filmed two captures as part of their project. They were also successful in filming large numbers of caribou, a wolf kill, and a bear taking the killed caribou away from the wolves.
- The Alaskans will be doing range-wide flights to check for collar survival from May 23 to 26. A calving survey is planned for June.
- A new photo survey is planned for this year. It is uncertain whether the new digital equipment will be used.
- In Alaska, the population of every herd other than the PCH is in decline.

Mike related that Todd Brinkman, a professor at the University of Alaska, spoke with him last week about collaborative management and working with user communities. His area of focus is on how climate change will affect communities. Todd would like to visit communities to talk to people and find out where they hunt, and to see where fires are most likely to occur. Todd wanted to know if the Board is interested in being involved and, if so, he would like input. Mike felt that Todd will need direction since he has not worked in Yukon previously. In order to make it a useful exercise, the Board could help direct Todd and his team to who would be the best individuals to speak with.

It was suggested to put Todd in touch with the appropriate First Nations, GRRB and RRCs in Fort McPherson, Old Crow and Dawson. Mike stated that a member of the PCTC should either review or be actively involved in the research.

Action 15-05: Executive Director to respond to Todd Brinkman with contact suggestions

Government of NWT update

Marsha Branigan provided the following update to the Board:

- Marsha met with the Inuvik HTC to discuss harvest management challenges and she will attend their annual meeting. The committee is aware of the issues and HTC wants to help; they just need to determine the best way to do that. One suggestion was using reporting as a requirement for the CHAP funding.
- Concerns have been raised about how cost effective running a check station is, and whether there are any more efficient alternative. For example, a game guardian who proactively engages with harvesters may be better.
- A new initiative that has been discussed is that of talking to students at the high schools about the PCMB and the importance of harvest data collection and analyses. Then the students could be asked to go home

and interview hunters. The students would then compile data and be shown how the data is used to calculate the estimated harvest.

PCMB Communications update

Kelly Milner provided the following update on communication activities:

- The caribou location website is still being worked on with the PCTC. The plan is to use the PCMB website by inserting a new page or by integrating additional information into existing pages. This will happen in the near future and should be done by September.
- A cooking class is planned to be held in the Old Crow school's home economics area. Kelly will advise the Board in case any members are interested in participating.
- The cookbook project, which is a joint project between PCMB and VGFN, is still proceeding. Two weeks ago, the key project session was cancelled because of no caribou meat being available to use in the cooking project. It will be rescheduled to a future date.
- Kelly spent four days in March with local cooks. She also obtained a head cheese recipe from Stephen Frost.
- Kelly accessed cooking-related information via the VGFN Heritage branch to find references to various uses for caribou parts. She also spent time perusing the local store to ensure the cookbook's modern recipes will be designed with available ingredients in mind.
- Creation of some puppets for the caribou puppet video has begun. The plan is to have the pilot video ready for the fall.
- Information sheets are being drafted with fast facts regarding harvest reporting, counting the caribou, telling the difference between cows and bulls, collaring, information about the PCMA, cumulative effects and other topics.
- Potential options for updating the educational materials for the PCH schools program are being explored, as well as simplifying the main points in the hunter education guide into a cartoon style booklet.

Review of HMP Implementation Plan

Joe Tetlichy noted that harvest management processes need to be improved. This may be because new people in responsible positions do not fully understand their responsibilities. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for Joe to contact each new key staff person with the various parties to personally meet them and provide an overview of the HMP and its Implementation Plan.

The process for the five-year HMP IP review and recommendations for changes were discussed. The directions in activity 3.3.1 of the Implementation Plan were referenced.

It was agreed that the following process will be suggested in a letter to the Parties:

- Parties to review the HMP and its IP and provide input to the PCMB by September 15, 2015 if they would like to see proposed revisions.
- PCMB will consolidate and discuss the feedback at its October Board meeting.
- PCMB will forward a summary report to Parties following its October meeting.
- PCMB will coordinate a facilitated workshop on February 9 and 10, 2016, in conjunction with the Annual Harvest Meeting, in Dawson City for all IP participants at the senior official level to undertake a review of the report and agree on revisions that may be required. The purpose of the workshop would be to collaboratively reflect on experiences over the past five years and fully discuss any issues identified with the HMP and its IP. The goal of the workshop would be to achieve consensus on any revisions required.
- The HMP and/or IP revisions will be finalized for signature by all Parties.

Parties will be asked if they agree with the HMP and IP review process, as outlined. If so, the PCMB will proceed on this basis.

Next Meeting and Closing Prayer

The next Board meetings will be held in Fort McPherson on October 13 and 14, and in Whitehorse on December 11 and 12, 2015.

A closing prayer was offered by Joe Tetlich.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. on May 16, 2015.