

# Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

December 11 and 12, 2015

Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre (Room A)  
Whitehorse, Yukon

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## In attendance

### Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair  
Marsha Branigan, Government of the Northwest Territories  
Nicole McCutchen, Government of Yukon  
Ian McDonald, Government of Canada  
William Josie, Vuntut Gwitchin  
Steven Buyck, Nacho Ny'ak Dun  
Wilbert Firth, Gwich'in Tribal Council  
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council  
Art Christiansen, Trondek Hwech'in  
Ed Taylor, Trondek Hwech'in (Alternate)  
Deana Lemke, Executive Director  
Matthias Lemke, Assistant

### Presenters/Guests

Mike Sutor, Environment Yukon  
Kelly Milner, Communications Consultant  
Rob Florkiewicz, Environment Yukon  
Troy Hegel, Environment Yukon  
Michael Svoboda, Canadian Wildlife Service  
Graham VanTighem, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board  
Lindsay Staples, WMAC (NS)

## Welcome and Opening Prayer

Chair Joe Tetlich welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., after which he offered an opening prayer.

Joe noted that Doug Urquhart passed away on December 2, 2015. Doug worked with the PCMB for a number of years and was well-known as a facilitator, cartoonist, and someone who put a lot of his life helping with First Nation-related issues. Doug was instrumental in the development of the Harvest Management Plan. Members expressed their condolences.

## Review Agenda

The agenda was reviewed by the Board and accepted.

***Motion to accept agenda  
Moved by Wilbert Firth  
Seconded by Billy Storr  
Carried***

## Review Minutes

The Minutes of the October 13 and 14, 2015 meeting were reviewed and approved by the Board.

***Motion to accept Minutes of the October 13 and 14, 2015 meeting as distributed  
Moved by Art Christiansen  
Seconded by Billy Storr  
Carried***

## Chair's Update

Joe Tetlichy related highlights of the International Porcupine Caribou Board meeting in Yellowknife, including Don Russell's presentation about the Bathurst caribou herd. Bruce McDonald from Wekeezhi RRB presented information regarding the challenges experienced by NWT and Nunavut in working together to manage the herd. Due to differing regulations in the territories and different harvest expectations of various First Nations, it has been challenging to get all parties to work together for the preservation of the herd. The herd is now down to approximately 18,000 animals.

Joe also related feedback regarding a YESAB-sponsored public meeting regarding Northern Cross Yukon's (NCY) project in the Eagle Plains region. After a presentation by NCY's president, workshop-style sessions were held focusing on caribou, water, and permafrost-related concerns. Comments from these sessions are available on the YESAB website. Quite a few caribou-related concerns were raised, primarily around access via proposed all-season roads but also about stopping operations if caribou arrive in the project area.

Joe commented on the negative media coverage of the harvesting that took place on the Dempster Highway in October and noted that while the media portrayed it as unethical, a lot of the positive aspects were not highlighted. Having been there personally after the October PCMB meeting, Joe noted that there were some very organized hunts, with animals being gutted and skinned by families. Most hunters were adequately far away from the highway. A lot of

families were seen educating and working with young people. Joe said that effort does need to be put into educating communities, however, about improving hunting practices on the Dempster and even in Old Crow, since irresponsible hunting gives the communities a bad reputation. It would be a good idea for the Board to have a presence on the Dempster when there is a peak in hunting and to use large posters to highlight respectful harvesting.

Mike Suitor related that Kirby Meister would like to talk to the Board about these issues at a future date.

## **Administrative and Financial Report**

Deana Lemke, updated the Board on various matters. Considerable time was spent dealing with the media about the negative reports regarding harvesting on the Dempster and in Old Crow. The media had not checked facts with PCMB and provided some incorrect information. RRCs requested assistance with communication to their communities. Kelly Milner was asked to quickly produce several posters regarding ethical hunting practices and respect for the caribou, which were sent to the RRCs and First Nations.

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board (YFWMB) has concluded consultation on two regulation changes co-submitted by the PCMB. The public consultation meeting was very well attended. Deana attended the public meeting on short notice to represent the Board and accompany Rob Florkiewicz during the presentation of that segment of regulation change proposals. Deana voiced appreciation for Mike Suitor's support during that evening, as Mike provided several answers to questions about the Hart River herd in relation to PCH via telephone. YFWMB also held a recent board meeting in Whitehorse. At that meeting, Deana provided an update on PCMB's activities, specifically highlighting the five-year review of the HMP and IP. The MOU between YFWMB and PCMB has now been signed. YFWMB agreed that the interchange between the two boards is very valuable.

A North American Caribou Workshop is coming up in May 2016, in Thunder Bay, Ontario. PCMB has been asked to be a presenter. Joe Tetlich will be going, and if any other Board member would like to go they are requested to let Deana know.

Deana met with Lindsay Staples regarding the scope of the IP review. Lindsay is in agreement with the Board's suggestions about narrowing the scope to an administrative review, with a full review occurring in 2020.

A STEP application has been submitted for a student this summer to work with Mike Suitor.

A financial overview was provided. The budget is currently underspent, but in anticipation of communication project work that still needs to be billed and the added expenses related the AHM, the core budget will likely be completely spent. Some of the communication project activities have taken more time than anticipated and this may require some reallocation of other budget items to accommodate additional expenditures.

***Motion to reallocate up to \$15,000 within the existing budget to accommodate additional Communication Project expenses.***

***Moved by Billy Storr***

***Seconded by Nicole McCutchen***

***Carried***

## **Herd Update**

### **Government of the NWT Update**

Marsha Branigan provided the following update to the Board:

- After the October PCMB meeting, Marsha observed some of the hunting activities on the Dempster firsthand. Some gutting took place right beside the highway.
- A lot of samples were received this year. Tetlit RRC had representatives handing out sample kits during the Dempster harvesting.
- A hunter education workshop to promote ethical harvesting is being considered.
- While data collection was completed, a problem with harvest data entry was experienced by IGC. Marsha will talk to Steven Baryluk to assist with resolving this.
- Inuvik did not do any data collection yet this year; they are trying to start doing some now.
- The Joint Secretariat is working on a new data collection program.
- Caribou condition was not as good as expected during this year.

### **Government of Yukon Update**

Mike Sutor provided the following update to the Board:

- Conservation Officers were very active this year — there was almost continual coverage on the Dempster during the hunting period. The officers also worked with Yukon Parks officers to provide them with additional training.
- The check station started operating on October 22 and caught the first wave of hunters going up the highway. It continued to run until just recently, running double shifts. Good reporting and engagement took place.
- A fall flight to check range-wide distribution of the PCH was completed just before the meeting in Fort McPherson.

- Due to pressure to open up the Hart River herd zones, a short flight was taken to check on the location of the Hart River herd. The area has not yet been opened for hunting because PCH continue to move in and out of it. Some of the PCH is mixed with the Hart River herd south of Windy Pass right now. There were 35 licensed kills on the Hart River herd this year. The sustainable harvest is 44. However, the non-licensed harvest is not known for certain. It may be around 10, based on information from the communities. A new population estimate will be conducted this year.
- A range-wide flight will be taken in March 2016 to check PCH survival rates and collar deployments. Currently, 100 collars have been deployed, which is on target.
- A new census will be attempted in the coming summer. The Alaskans are trying to transition to the new digital equipment. The Forty Mile caribou herd will be the priority, along with PCH.
- A number of inquiries about filming the PCH have been received from organizations including CBC's Nature of Things and National Geographic, along with three other serious inquiries from major companies.
- Adequate female survival rates are not being obtained. It will take a few more years before enough data will have been gathered. This is a big gap because it is the most important data from a technical perspective. More GPS collars are needed to get good statistical data for this metric.
- The PCMB STEP student application has been submitted. Previous recipients of the Johnny Charlie scholarship have gone on to work on for government, and some even have higher level positions in YG. They talk positively about the opportunity. Students get involved in everything biologist do, so they get a full idea of what is involved. Mike hopes to get a student involved in a full range of activities this summer.

The concept of creating an information package for organizations wanting to film the herd was discussed. This would be efficient since the information provided is usually the same.

## **PCMB Communications Update**

Kelly Milner connected to the meeting via telephone and reviewed information being displayed for the Board via Powerpoint presentation, highlighting the following:

- Information posted on social media about the cooking workshop in Old Crow had over 2,000 views.
- PCH fact sheets are in the process of being developed. Kelly has consulted with WMAC(NS) on muskox information and will also talk to Mike Suitor about this.
- Posters regarding respectful harvesting were reviewed. The intent of these posters was to send a strong message in response to concerns and issues caused by harvesting on the Dempster.

- A preview of a new folder with PCMB information, designed to hold PCH related fact sheets was provided.
- A preview of a satellite collar movement animation was provided. The intent is to allow users to move a sliding bar to see where caribou move to during the year.
- A cookbook and butchering guide is in progress. The intent is to show how to use all parts of the caribou and to provide ideas for modern recipes. A draft of the cookbook should be ready for February 2016. The intent is to have the final version ready for Caribou Days.
- The set and puppets have been put together for the puppet show. Kelly provided a brief overview of some of the puppet characters and the set. The puppet show project is approximately \$1,000 overspent at this time. Kelly noted that it would be great if some additional funds could be made available for this project. The goal is to have it done by end of January.
- An illustrated hunter education guide, based on an earlier discussion with Billy Storr, is still in the conceptual stage. The idea is to show correct harvesting techniques with pictures instead of text, using cartoon style images instead of real people.

A discussion around the “No Respect” posters took place. Board members felt that it would be good to add a positive message along with the existing content — for example, showing pictures of elders with dried meat and families with young ones being taught; contrasting respectful practices with improper practices.

## **Arctic Borderlands presentation (Michael Svoboda)**

Michael Svoboda presented information about how Arctic Borderlands contributes to monitoring data, and discussed the challenges of consolidating data using different scales. The value of data which is consistently gathered and recorded over time was highlighted.

Michael explained that Arctic Borderlands’ goals are:

- To monitor and assess ecosystem changes in the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and adjacent coastal and marine areas.
- To encourage use of both science-based studies and studies based on local and traditional knowledge in ecological monitoring and ecosystem management.
- To improve communications and understanding among governments, aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and scientists with regard to ecosystem knowledge and management.
- To foster capacity-building and training opportunities in northern communities in the context of the above-listed goals.

Climate data, like snow depth and temperature, could also help to explain why certain trends may be happening. Co-op indicators and scientific indicators can be combined to inform a decision-making framework.

A review of the current data and data-gathering process is to be undertaken by contractors who are to make recommendations after the review. This will ideally be completed by the end of March. One of the desired outcomes of the planning process is to harmonize the timing of information requirements. For example, PCH data for 2015 would normally be available in March 2016, and would therefore not be available for the AHM. It would be nice to harmonize these requirements.

## **Harvest Management Plan Update**

Responses to PCMB's AHM recommendations were reviewed. IGC's reply is still pending. This year's Annual Summary Report from PCTC will go out with the next AHM information package that will be mailed to Parties.

## **Population Model**

Nicole McCutchen led a discussion on the upcoming population workshop. This discussion was a continuation of the October PCMB meeting, during which members agreed that a workshop or demonstration about the new population model was needed to engage stakeholders, build comfort with the model (and models in general) and to help people understand why harvest data is important. Nicole would prefer to use PCMB members as a test audience for a dry run of the presentation.

Members agreed that the Board needs to have confidence in the population model and the process, and that each member needs to understand it individually.

Troy Hegel suggested running the model with average condition inputs and only focusing on the harvest data component. By running the model with various harvest data inputs, the outputs would show people the effect of accurate data.

The Board agreed to hold web-based sessions on January 12 and 20 at 1:00 p.m. Pacific Time to review the presentation. Marsha's office, Nicole's boardroom (Yukon Fish and Wildlife), and Mike's office in Dawson will be central locations.

## **Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board**

Graham VanTighem provided an update of Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board's (YFWMB) recent activities:

- YFWMB holds regular meetings with the Minister of Environment, and will also try to meet with the Minister of Energy Mines and Resources in the future.
- YFWMB made recommendations on the elk management plan this year, and is collaborating with Yukon government on enhancing lake trout stocks. More regulations and restrictions are being put on lake trout.
- A grizzly bear management plan for Yukon is in early stages of development.
- Advanced fur handling courses were held in five Yukon communities to help trappers get more value out of their furs.
- About 140 people came to the Whitehorse meeting regarding the recent regulation changes for caribou. Deana's attendance and help with answering some questions on PCH was much appreciated. Similar meetings were also held in Haines Junction, Tagish, Carmacks and Dawson.

Graham reviewed the information about regulation changes provided in tab 5 of the meeting binder and noted that YFWMB is responsible for public consultation. First Nations are not considered part of the public; this falls under government to government consultation which happens after the public phase.

Deana noted that it is PCMB's responsibility to communicate this information to Parties which are not included in YFWMB's scope.

Marsha expressed a concern that the regulation change for the Hart River herd may be perceived as an infringement on aboriginal rights. She stated that the Board needs to send information to Parties as soon as possible to let them know that the Board is supporting this, and so that they don't hear it for the first time from Government.

## **WMAC North Slope**

### Muskox Update

Lindsay Staples, Chair of the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), updated the Board on the status concerns that originated in Aklavik in February 2015, which were about muskox deterring Porcupine caribou from being closer to Aklavik for harvesting and about Porcupine caribou not being available for harvesting. The concern is that the presence of muskox is affecting the migratory patterns and feeding areas of caribou. The issue is not about abundance of caribou, but access to caribou.



In response to the concerns, it was decided that a closer look be taken at muskox and caribou interactions. IFA research funding proposals were submitted to do a muskox survey in the Richardson Mountains in Yukon and NWT in 2016, and funds were recently approved for this project.

While muskox populations seemed to be steadily increasing in the early 1990s, the population in Alaska has since crashed and there is a zero hunting quota in the refuge. In Yukon, there has not been a further expansion of muskox populations and they have not moved as far south as was expected. Now there is only a small population of muskox in Yukon. A management framework based on population size is still being worked on, and the intent is to have consultation on the framework. One approach may be to circulate the proposed framework and invite comments on it. A meeting will definitely be held in Aklavik.

Another project related to muskox and caribou interactions is underway. Approximately 16 collars will have been placed on muskox by next year. Studies will be based on satellite collar information and on-the-ground observations of interactions when muskox and caribou are close to each other.

While some parties regard North Slope muskox as an invasive species, others have a very different view. YG introduced muskox as a valued species and they were initially protected. In Aklavik there is still a concern about muskox having a negative effect on caribou; on the other hand YG has concerns about any harvest due to the small numbers of muskox.

Billy Storr noted that people's perception would likely be a lot different this year because of the way the caribou have migrated. Now may be a good time to consult with the communities because of the recent accessibility of caribou.

Lindsay related that since Aklavik was the only jurisdiction which had concerns, the consultation will be focused on that community.

Joe Tetlich expressed that the Board would definitely be interested in participating in future meetings regarding muskox.

#### Polar Bear Technical Committee

Lindsay noted that the Board may be interested in what is being produced by the Canadian Polar Bear Technical Committee. Every year, the committee produces a table which indicates whether populations are stable, increasing or declining. In some areas, traditional knowledge and scientific information differ greatly. Before the next meeting there will be a traditional knowledge workshop to determine how it can best be applied to the Beaufort polar bear population. The outcome of these efforts could also be beneficial for caribou management, and Lindsay encouraged the Board to keep track of this.

## Harvest Management Plan (HMP) Implementation Plan

The format and process for undertaking the five-year review of the HMP Implementation Plan (IP) was discussed.

Nicole and Deana suggested that some of the editorial reviews be made ahead of time, to allow more time to get to the actual Native User Agreement and harvest reporting issues. Marsha suggested that a preface be added to the IP, stating that we are not revising the HMP, but are setting out the framework, and that activities will be updated. It was agreed that Marsha, Mike, Ian, Nicole, and Deana would collaborate to make editorial changes to the IP to the AHM and that “track changes” will be used for transparency.

Lindsay Staples and Board members agreed that in order to review the 24 activities and eight tasks, projecting the current IP on screen and reviewing each item with the Parties would be the best approach. The document can be edited on-screen during discussions, as agreement is obtained. The table can be worked through line by line and updated with approval of the Parties. Some of the changes are basic updates and will not need much discussion. Other issues, like Native User Agreements and harvest data collection can be acknowledged and necessary action items can be identified, but are not expected to be entirely resolved at the meeting.

After extensive discussion, agreement was reached that the review would take place in two phases. At the beginning of the workshop, given the crucial role of the PCMA and the lack of familiarity that some new representatives may have with it, PCMB will provide a brief overview of the PCMA and the principles within it. Then the group will work through the IP together. Any key issues will be flagged and addressed further on the second day.

It will be important for participants to understand the PCMA and their Final Agreement when discussing the Native User Agreements. It will also be important that Parties and technical people be familiar with the background material.

It was agreed that Parties will be advised of the following via letter:

- the request to ensure that the right people are present and prepared, including knowledge of PCMA
- feedback to date will be consolidated and incorporated into a new draft IP prior to the workshop, copies of responses will be provided in letter
- the proposed workshop schedule (line by line IP review, further discussion of heavier items later)
- That Native user agreements and harvest reporting will be discussed and action items addressed but will need additional work after the meeting.

Mike Suitor noted that the PCTC hasn't yet engaged with their Alaskan counterparts regarding IP revisions. Since the Alaskans are implicated in the IP, we may want to consider how we get information from their technical group and how we would ensure that the Alaskans are aware of this process. Deana agreed to follow up with Shannon Stotyn.

## **Northern Cross Yukon project update**

Mike Suitor provided an overview of Northern Cross Yukon's (NCY) project in the Eagle Plains area, reviewing information about the number of wells, roads, flow testing, water withdrawals, and the re-injection of by-products.

As part of the mitigation plan, Mike noted that NCY committed to decommissioning and making impassible the access roads once a well is suspended, capped or abandoned. However, the access plan did not meet PCMB's criteria regarding the road access points and monitoring. Sequencing of work related to winter vs all season roads is not clear. Rationale for the sequencing of work and the requirements of roads for wells should be provided. All-season roads should not be created unless absolutely necessary.

The relationship of access points vs footprint was discussed. While having less access points creates a larger footprint, it seems preferable because more access points would have a greater effect on the herd due to increased access for hunters.

Mike reviewed recent caribou location data on a map overlaid on the project area, which clearly showed caribou moving directly through the area. NCY's proposal to use satellite collar location information to trigger mitigations was discussed and deemed inadequate. For example, it was noted that there could be 1,000 caribou present in the area without a collar.

The adaptive management component of the proposal is weak. There seems to be no mechanism to engage stakeholders or alter activities based on the monitoring of wildlife.

The Board agreed that the expectations in the Board's submission to YESAB need to be clear and concise, and need to be integrated with the permit, so that NCY has to comply with them.

Wilbert Firth stated that based on past experiences with other companies, environmental monitoring should be integral to the permit and the monitors should not be employed by NCY.

Stanley Njootli Jr., Deputy Chief for Old Crow, stated that using skidoos, driving cars and using outboard motors is part of the modern lifestyle, but we need to do things safely. Knowing the hydrology of the area and knowing what is in the shale

that they are drilling into is necessary. Vuntut Gwitchin does not want there to be any fracking unless it is 100% safe. Regarding road access into the project area, the only accessible way is where they want to put the road. Stanley stated that if they were using the area for traditional use, they would go where the proposed road is. Vuntut Gwitchin obtained a legal opinion on whether they can stop the project, and it is impossible to do. The best thing that can be done is ensure that NCY make it environmentally safe. Vuntut Gwitchin consider it a sensitive habitat because it is the winter range for the caribou. The exploration work has to be considerate of the presence of caribou. More information on drill waste is also needed.

## **Next Meeting and Closing Prayer**

The next Board meeting will be held in conjunction with the Annual Harvest Meeting in Dawson City.

A closing prayer was offered by Joe Tetlich and the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.