

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

September 22-24, 2007
Whitehorse, Yukon

In attendance

Members

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Steve Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwech'in
Sonny Blake, Gwich'in Tribal Council
Georgie Moses, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
Steven Buyck, Nacho Ny'ak Dun
Doug Larsen, Government of Yukon
Ron Morrison, Government of Northwest Territories
Billy Archie, Inuvialuit Game Council
Wendy Nixon, Government of Canada

Deana Lemke, Secretariat

Due to the Dempster Highway being closed to traffic, Ron Morrison from Government of Northwest Territories, and Billy Archie from IGC were unable to attend on Saturday. Wendy Nixon was also not able to be in attendance on Saturday.

Presenters

Dorothy Cooley, Regional Biologist, Yukon Department of Environment
Torrie Hunter, Yukon Department of Environment
Elisabeth Robins, University of Alaska (Fairbanks)
Kristine Wray, University of Alberta
Deb Wortley, Oil and Gas Branch, Yukon Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources
Kirstie Simpson, Yukon Department of Energy, Mines and Resources
Doug Urquhart, Quill, Inc.
Boyd Pyper, Yukon Department of Environment
Shawn Francis, North Yukon Planning Commission
Brian Johnston, Peel Watershed Planning Commission
Graham Van Tighem, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

Introductions and Opening Prayers

Participants introduced themselves and there were opening prayers.

Review Agenda

The Agenda was reviewed by the Board.

Motion to accept agenda moved by Steven Buyck

Seconded by Billy Archie

Carried

Review of minutes

The minutes of the February 2-4, 2007 Board meeting were reviewed and approved.

Motion to accept minutes as presented moved by Steve Taylor

Seconded by Doug Larsen

Carried

Review of Action Items

Action items were reviewed.

To address Action Item No. 06-14, Deana/Joe to write a letter to signatories that PCMB tried for three years to get parties to table and has been unsuccessful. It will be up to signatories to initiate discussions to potentially amend the PCMA.

To address Action Item No. 07-11, Deana will prepare a discussion paper re commercial use of herd to assist at HMS meeting.

Herd Update – Dorothy Cooley

Dorothy Cooley provided the Board with written reports outlining the 2007 March captures and composition count, the Satellite program, the 2007 Calving Report, the Census, the snow machine vegetation study, body condition monitoring, the November 2007 shooting workshop and the Dempster Check Station Summary for the fall of 2006.

Dorothy reported that we cannot expect financial contributions from Canadian Wildlife Services for satellite collar program given the freeze on operation and maintenance funding announced by the Government of Canada. These studies provide data about what is going on with the herd, but they don't explain why things are happening. Other partners in the Satellite Collar Program will continue to provide support.

Dorothy has compiled information about the legislative, policy, and ecological context for the Harvest Management Strategy. She suggested that other organizations could pull together information, as well, to present at the workshop.

Dempster Hunting Update and Hunting Regulations Update – Torrie Hunter

Government of Yukon will announce next week that Department of Environment will not enforce the 500-metre no-hunting corridor for caribou or the one-week closure to let the leaders pass. The Department will not restrict First Nation hunters from using snow machines off-ighway but will continue to enforce the regulations against resident hunters. Regulations prohibiting shooting out of vehicles or shooting along or across road and wounding animals will still be enforced. Regulations remain on the books until repealed by OIC. The Department will await direction arising from the Harvest Management Strategy. For now, the regulations will not be enforced.

This fall when caribou arrive, conservation officers will still be on the road. Signs will be posted to advise hunters of the rules. A new system for consultation is being developed.

Caribou Leaders Project - Elisabeth Robins

Elisabeth Robins is a Master's student from University of Alaska (Fairbanks) who did a research project to document local knowledge of caribou leaders. She was invited to present a summary of the information she gathered in 29 interviews with people from Tr'ondëk Hwech'in, Tetlit Gwich'in and Vuntut Gwitch'in First Nations. The 29 interviews were not enough to draw conclusions and generalize.

Most interviewees said leaders were small groups (1-10). There's a consensus that cows lead the migration in the spring. Different accounts, depending on location, report bulls or cows lead the fall migration. All communities talked about leaders in one way or another. There was no significant difference in how people see leaders, except that in Dawson they're at end of migration. Almost every interview in Dawson said the closure was bad timing because it only leaves a short time to hunt between the herd's arrival and the start of the rut.

The study's conclusions: Local knowledge shows a complex understanding of the leaders. There is not one type of leader. Local knowledge depends on where people live, how they were taught about caribou and their hunting experience.

Elisabeth did other interviews with reindeer farmers in Nome, Alaska, about their knowledge of caribou leaders. The reindeer farmers have learned a lot about Western Arctic Caribou herd because the caribou lead their reindeer away from them. Years ago, the caribou have stopped migrating to their region, so community members started herding reindeer. Now the caribou come by the

community and lead the reindeer away. Some herders have lost their entire herds. The herders say lone bulls come ahead of herd, then smaller herd follows, then bigger herd follows. Those mix in with reindeer and lead them away from caribou. Some people travel 200 miles every day to on their snow machines to chase caribou, and they find despite their work it's almost impossible to drive the caribou away. Caribou hunters in Nome say first caribou are older, skinnier, and they don't hunt those caribou. Second herd is the young, healthy, fat ones.

Oil and Gas Disposition Process (Peel Plateau) – Deb Wortley

Deb Wortley, Rights and Royalty Manager, Oil and Gas Rights, Yukon's Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, was invited to give a presentation to the Board about the oil and gas disposition process.

The oil and gas disposition process involves the issuance of rights to explore for oil and gas. Permits are required for activities; licenses and environmental screenings are still required. The process begins with the branch reviewing requests by industry for posting. The public, First Nations and government are invited review the requests. Then the Branch provides a report to the Minister, and the approved requests go to a call for bids. The highest bid is the sole criterion for acceptance. The Branch accepts work bids. A work bid is a promise by the companies to generate a specified amount of work, and they make a 25% deposit that the branch returns to the company as work is paid out. The permit gives a company the right to explore and test. The companies can obtain a lease to produce.

In July, there were three requests from industry for postings in the Peel. There is currently one permit near that area, and it expires in 2008.

Oil and Gas Activity – Best Management Practices – Kirstie Simpson

Kirstie Simpson from the Yukon Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, was invited to give a presentation to the Board on best management practices. Best practices are any kind of new or existing practice that will reduce the time, intensity or duration of the footprint on the land base. They are planning tools or strategies that increase the chances of meeting the long-term goals and objectives of each project. They are applied as a range of practices rather than a single practice, and they're not prescriptive. BMPs provide objectives, context, and rationale.

Relating to specific concerns of the PCMB: The branch is making an effort to address spread of non-native invasive plant species in Yukon. It is working to develop BMPs for activities in caribou habitat. It will address concerns such as cumulative impacts, seismic activities and reduction of linear disturbance. Given

the advanced state of reclamation on existing seismic lines and roads and trails, it has been determined that it would usually be better to create new roads and trails using modern practices. Traditional knowledge is a component of BMPs.

Public Meeting/Discussion

The Board held an open house to brief the public on the Board mandate, provide an update on Board activities and host an open discussion.

Harvest Management Strategy Workshop Planning – Doug Urquhart

Doug Urquhart has been contracted to facilitate the Harvest Management Strategy, and he was invited to meet with the Board to plan the HMS workshop that will take place in October. Doug facilitated a three-hour discussion for the Board as well as other community representatives to plan for the upcoming HMS workshop. Participants discussed the methods of developing the HMS, and they were careful not to start working out the details of the Harvest Management Plan.

Important points include:

- It is important to plan for how the HMS will work once it has been completed. Ultimately, there should be buy-in from all the groups and from the harvesters.
- PCMB should function as a catalyst for all governments, including First Nation governments, in managing harvest. PCMB can research and identify options, and the HMS signatories can make decisions for the HMS. In terms of implementation, the Harvest Management Plan should allow as much flexibility as possible for First Nations to achieve their ends in the way that works for them and their governments.
- Treaties must be mentioned; treaty rights must be recognized.
- How the PCMB members and working group members communicate with their own citizens and inform the communities will make or break the HMS. The whole community has to buy in.
- The HMS must have ability to implement measures that vary according to governments.
- There should be face-to-face community meetings to ensure hunters understand why to follow recommendations.
- The plan must acknowledge “sharing” of the harvest.
- The hard thing will not be deciding what to do, but deciding when to do it.
- It will be important to understand harvest numbers, including how many more Porcupine Caribou are being harvested due to the restrictions on the Bluenose Herd.

Wildlife Act Amendments – Boyd Pyper

Boyd Pyper, policy analyst for Yukon Department of Environment, was invited to give a presentation to the Board about the Wildlife Act amendments.

Environment Yukon is undertaking Consultation to bring the *Wildlife Act* into conformity with the land claims final agreements. All sections of the *Wildlife Act* that the Department thinks need to be changed to make the act consistent with the land claims agreements are outlined in a package that has been distributed to all user groups. There is no proposed amendment to the definition of “wildlife”.

There are two references to the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement*, dealing with total allowable harvest restrictions. The UFA and land claims allow the total allowable harvest to be addressed by the *Wildlife Act*. PCMB is not obligated to make any comments. The PCMB is encouraged to review the amendments and ask questions or make comments as required.

The consultation process will continue until December 21. This ensures there are 88 days for organizations to ask for information and meetings. This will ensure all groups can prepare submissions. Boyd will make follow-up phone calls to implementation managers. He will actively pursue dialogue with all the stakeholders. Based on feedback, he will report to Cabinet. Cabinet will make a decision. Drafters will put it on paper. Then it will go back to the House. By spring 2008, the Act should be amended to meet obligations under the final agreements.

CARMA Update – Wendy Nixon and Gary Kofinas

Wendy Nixon from the Canadian Wildlife Service and Gary Kofinas from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (by teleconference) were invited to give an update about the CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment (CARMA) network.

Wendy described CARMA’s goals: to assess the vulnerability and resilience of human-rangifer systems; to coordinate knowledge collection and sharing; and to develop and promote adaptive strategies and policies that will ensure a sustainable Human-Rangifer future. CARMA has been approved for an International Polar Year (IPY) project, and the funding for the four-year project just arrived in August. The Porcupine Caribou Herd is one of the herds selected for study as an indicator species. There is more existing information about the Porcupine Caribou Herd than any other herd in North America.

Gary reviewed the IPY project proposal. They want their work to be useful to people who make decisions about the herd. They want to find ways to include knowledge of caribou users in the process. There are many regions and many communities across the circumpolar North. Their proposal is to have groups like the PCMB participate in CARMA activities. The PCMB can be involved in

CARMA in three ways: 1) documentation of regional conditions through reports from user rep members, 2) use of decision support tools for caribou management, and 3) caribou user organization and networking. CARMA has funding to support PCMB members' meeting an extra day to participate. There is often a disconnection between the monitoring and the decision-making. This project is aimed at bringing research and decision making together. The benefit to the PCMB of participating would be to be able to communicate how changes affect users to people outside the region, information exchange, receiving information from scientists, the ability to work with models, and the ability to learn from other organizations how they address similar problems.

The Board supports the networking component but is concerned about what would be required of Board members as well as how the information would be collected and used in the monitoring component.

The matter was deferred for further discussion at the next meeting.

Traditional Knowledge in Caribou Co-Management Organizations Research Project – Kristine Wray

Kristine Wray, a Master's student from the University of Alberta, was invited to present her research project "Caribou Population Decline: Gwich'in Responses to Change" to the Board.

In Kristine's research, she will explore the rules-in-use of caribou hunting. She spoke to the Tetlit Gwich'in elders. What are community norms around caribou hunting, specifically traditional and contemporary norms. What is the community response to people who don't follow respected norms. She wants to discover the ethical structures in the community, especially targeted to ecological variability. She wants to ask hunters about the level of conformity to traditional rules and whether there are new rules – and why. She also wants to hear how hunters respond to regulations. She will also map knowledge networks and see where science and traditional knowledge overlap.

This research contributes to understanding of hunter behaviour. It can inform the hunter education program. It will document community responses to ecological variability and the community ethical systems. It will also contribute to understanding of aboriginal relationships to caribou, and help in the management of the human-caribou interaction.

NWT Caribou Update – Ron Morrison

Ron Morrison reported on other herds in the Northwest Territories.

There will be no population survey for the Bluenose Herd until 2009. There will continue to be calf survival studies and composition studies. Information to date suggests this has been a good year for the caribou. Work is being done concerning harvest regulations for these herds.

The NWT Dempster check station opened on the 21st of October and it will stay in operation until when the Peel ferry closes. Gwich'in Tribal Council was funded to hire elders to staff the check station. There will also be an Inuvialuit elder, youth, and a wildlife officer. A Yukon Conservation Officer might participate, as well.

Ministerial Recommendations – Board Discussion

The Board made recommendations to the Yukon Minister of Environment on April 12, 2006. The Minister accepted the recommendations pending government-to-government consultation. Following the consultation, the Minister declined to accept the recommendations. The Board had a discussion about the Minister's decision.

Action 07-19: Deana to write a Caribou Update to advise the public of the status of the recommendations that went forward to the Ministers.

In-camera discussion

There was a discussion about addressing the media in reference to the Yukon Environment Minister's announcement about discontinuing enforcement of Dempster Highway regulations.

Chair's Report – Joe Tetlich

The Chair reported on Board business since the last meeting.

The Chair is in regular contact with the Secretariat and various groups and the public. It took six months to get all signatories to sign the HMS Protocol, and the HMS workshop was scheduled for October. The June meeting on the land did not take place for many reasons. In August the Chair gave an update for the PCMB at the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation meeting. People are calling the Board to locate the caribou, especially since the Satellite Collar Project was discontinued. The Board doesn't give out that information because it gives hunters an unfair advantage.

Every year, the Gwich'in Tribal Council invites the PCMB to their general assembly to update the delegation on what's happening with the caribou, the regulations and the herd counts. Joe attended and briefed the Gwich'in Tribal Council on PCMB activities. He heard at that meeting that people were very concerned that there hadn't been a count. There were a lot of caribou in the Tetlit Gwich'in region last year – the caribou were the furthest east in history. When they see the caribou nearby, they presume there are lots of caribou. He tried to explain to the communities that as a Board we are still looking at a worst case scenario. At the 2001 workshop with Gary Kofinas about harvest, the Board noted that it didn't want to get in a situation where nothing was planned and the herd declined and the Board had to act fast. Since that time, the PCMB has been working to get a strategy off the ground. The community is still concerned about the Dempster and their aboriginal rights. Community members are saying we have to respect our traditions, our culture and our elders. The Dempster cuts right through the habitat range of the caribou; it's easy access. More emphasis is put on education; people are saying we need to educate our young people. The people who are hunting now have developed their own hunting ethics, but to sustain the herd, we have to focus on the schools and the young people. The PCMB is working on that, in developing the education plan. The PCMB is also looking to learn from the example of the Tr'ondëk Hwech'in First Hunt program. More communities are working on education.

The Chair and Secretariat will attend the annual CARMA workshop in Vancouver in November. It provides a place for scientists and community members to share their perspectives. This North American Caribou Workshop is a forum for researchers to present findings in regard to different themes. The next forum will be in Newfoundland. There will also be a component to describe how important the caribou is to the native users, and this should educate the researchers.

Co-management research – Tracy Smith and Elisabeth Robins

Tracy Smith and Elisabeth Robins are from the University of Alaska, and they were invited to present a proposal to the Board. Tracy is researching boards to see how other boards deal with development issues. She would like to ask board members about what issues the Board has dealt with historically and what it is dealing with today. She has spoken with all other caribou management boards in North America, and she will compile a snapshot of what was going on across North America in the past year.

Tracy and Elisabeth are interested in reviewing minutes and presentations to describe the role of the board and its relationships with the communities and governments over the years. The Board expressed support for the projects.

Administrative and Financial Report – Deana Lemke

The Secretariat, Deana Lemke, gave an administrative and financial report.

The 20th Anniversary Annual Reports have arrived. They will be distributed to all user groups and other groups. A draft of this year's annual report was distributed for Board feedback; feedback within a week would be appreciated.

STEP funding was awarded from the Department of Education, but no student was hired this year, as those short-listed for the position had already accepted employment elsewhere.

The PCMB is working with several organizations to develop a hunter education program directly addressing the Porcupine Caribou Herd, and it will incorporate traditional knowledge. This initiative is needed and well supported, and WMAC will contribute funding to interviewing hunters in Aklavik to help gain traditional knowledge. This provides limited information, but it could still be useful.

A "Fun Facts" brochure was drafted for the Board's review and comment. If the Board agrees, more information brochures could be developed along the same theme and distributed to user communities. Over the past few months, the one-page information sheets and pamphlets on "counting the caribou" and "aim for your best" have been well received in the communities, and we're getting lots of request to send more.

Deana reviewed the PCMB's work in education. Last year, Don Russell and Deana presented information on the herd and the PCMB to an experiential studies class at Porter Creek High. It was very well received, and it will be done again this October.

The PCMB Schools Program needs to be updated and redistributed. The Board expressed support for proceeding.

The PCMB is mandated to keep beneficiary lists from user groups, and two have been received already. The lists should contain names only.

The PCMB has been invited to make a presentation at the upcoming Oil and Gas Symposium on Best Practices in Inuvik in October, immediately following the HMS Workshop.

Draft public consultation guidelines were distributed for the Board to review before the next meeting.

The Secretariat also reviewed the Board's financial information for the Board.

Brian Johnston – Peel Watershed Planning Commission

Brian Johnston was invited to present a status report for the Yukon portion Peel Watershed. The PWPC is working with result-based management principles. The statement of intent involves protecting the land, wildlife and habitats, cultural resources and waters while managing resource use. The long-term objective is to return all lands to their natural state after development activities are completed. Brian described a proposed zoning approach in which there are various degrees of conservation emphasis on various areas. Land use zones are being identified. For various zones, the PWPC is developing thresholds for footprint and fragmentation. Goals are to minimize land-use conflicts. Analysis for the Porcupine Caribou Herd use of the area is based solely on satellite collar information; telemetry data is not readily available. John Rydere said they will work to include data from the conventional collars. Currently, the PWPC is working on data collection and analysis. There will be several more steps, but the goal is to have a draft land use plan complete by the end of 2008.

North Yukon Planning Commission – Shawn Francis

Shawn Francis was invited to brief the Board on North Yukon Planning Commission activities.

A preliminary draft land use plan was distributed to the governments early this summer. The draft plan should be available to the public for review in November, and then consultation will take place in November and December. The recommended plan will be submitted in March of 2008.

The plan principles are based on the land claim, which focuses on sustainable development. Cumulative effects must therefore be managed. They operate on a precautionary principle. They are conservation-minded and promote adaptive management. Their six goals and 17 objectives were outlined. The Porcupine

Caribou Herd is a focus of the plan. The plan works to minimize habitat disturbance and alteration, habitat fragmentation and habitat avoidance. NYPC and PCMB have to work together to address where their work overlaps. Options for managing habitat effects might someday need to address the herd's changing population status.

Cumulative Impacts – Shawn Francis

Shawn Francis was invited to discuss cumulative impacts to the Board.

Cumulative effects defined: Environmental and socioeconomic change that results from a land use activity in combination with other past, present and future activities. Cumulative effects may be positive or negative. Negative effects are called impacts.

YESAB has a narrow mandate to conduct cumulative effects assessments. No single body is responsible for cumulative effects management. Thresholds are an approach to manage cumulative effects, and societies have to identify their thresholds. Management works as a result of coordinated actions: assessment, mitigation, government policy and planning. Right now we don't have government policy, but we're getting close to having plans. That will lead to discussion about cumulative effects and exploring alternative futures.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without managing cumulative effects. A plan to establish a framework for cumulative effects management through integrated cumulative effects requires identification of indicators (habitat based), land use modeling (future land uses), current benchmarks for cumulative effects indicators and thresholds for cumulative effects indicators. The indicators that seem most accurate to measure cumulative effects are: habitat effectiveness, total amount of human-caused surface disturbance and linear (access) density. Linear features increase human and predator access. As the levels of those indicators increase over time, the risk to wildlife also increases. Climate change is factored in the monitoring. Land use scenarios include oil and gas exploration and development, tourism, mineral exploration and development, and climate change impacts (changing vegetation, snowfall and fires).

NYPC is trying to estimate the effects of oil and gas development. They presented a model of Eagle Plains development to demonstrate. Eagle Plains is a Zone IV, reflecting a lower conservation/higher development focus. If the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline doesn't go up, then the Eagle Plains resources would be stranded and nothing will happen in Eagle Plains. If the energy sector comes to town, we can estimate another 10,000 km of seismic, 1,800 kilometres of pipelines, 700-900 wells, 1,000 to 1,500 all-season wells and lots of winter access roads and trails. Roads and well pads need gravel, so we can anticipate 1,000 to 2,000 hectares of gravel pits. In this scenario, they predict minimal impacts on caribou habitat, given oil and gas best management practices.

The biggest effects on the habitat effectiveness are from the 2004 fire season. The number of well pads and all-season roads are critical drivers of habitat impacts. The early portion of development is most important.

The Board discussed the presentation and requested setting aside a half a day to look at this matter in more detail in a future meeting.

YFWMB Update and Hart River Herd Joint Recommendations Status – Graham Van Tighem

Graham Van Tighem, Executive Director of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, was invited to update the PCMB on their board's activities and to discuss the joint recommendations to the Minister regarding the Hart River Herd.

The Dawson District Renewable Resource Council and Tr'ondëk Hwech'in proposed a regulation to protect the Hart River Herd in a zone that that Porcupine Caribou Herd used, as well. The two boards made joint recommendations to the Ministers. The Minister's replied, proposing a different measure to address the concerns. The government doesn't have emergency openings but can have emergency closures, so the government proposed managing some of the overlap zones as Hart River zones. If Porcupine Caribou Herd shows up after November 1, the regulation makes it a Porcupine Caribou zone. If the Porcupine Caribou Herd does not arrive, the minister will enact an emergency closure to protect the Hart River Herd. The proposal is almost identical to what the proponents put forth with the exception of that change.

Graham asked the PCMB, given that this won't be implemented until 2008, do the boards want to advise the Minister they agree with the change, or do they want to confirm with the proponents? The PCMB agreed that because both boards are satisfied, we should bring closure to the issue. Graham faxed the letter from government to Tr'ondëk Hwech'in and the Dawson District Renewable Resource Council offices. The regulations won't be in place until 2008, so the joint response to the Minister should be sent to the proponents before being sent to the Minister. Graham will draft a joint response from the PCMB to the Minister, acknowledging that the regulation is satisfactory, and the response will be sent to Tr'ondëk Hwech'in and the Dawson District Renewable Resource Council before sending the response to the Minister.

Action 07-20: *Deana to work with Graham Van Tighem to draft a letter jointly from PCMB and YFWMB regarding the Minister's response to the Hart River Herd recommendations.*

Board Business

The Board reviewed and finalized outstanding matters as follows:

CARMA matter was revisited. The Board has express written support in principle and will plan to work out the details of its involvement in the future with respect to the traditional knowledge portion of the CARMA project.

The Management Plan is outdated and needs review. Dorothy and other agencies rely on the Management Plan directives to secure funding for projects that inform the PCMB. The Management Plan is key to fulfilling the Board's responsibilities under the PCMA.

Action 07-21: *To set aside time to review the Management Plan, to discuss the process for amending the Management Plan, and to discuss how to involve the user communities at the next meeting.*

Action 07-22: *All members should review the Management Plan and make notes of points to discuss at the next meeting.*

The Board reviewed a draft letter to the Minister of Environment regarding cuts to the Canadian Wildlife Services funding and suggested revisions.

Action 07-23: *Send a copy of the letter to federal Minister of Environment re operation and maintenance funding freeze to all user groups and invite them to write a letter to the Minister as well.*

Set next meeting date and location

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for the week of December 3 in Old Crow. This will be confirmed with members, pending the availability of the Community Hall in Old Crow.

Closing prayer

Joe Tetlich closed the meeting with a prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.