

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

Aklavik, NT

May 13 and 14, 2019

In attendance

Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Alice McCulley, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
Robert Charlie, Gwich'in Tribal Council
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council
Harold Frost Jr., Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
Stephen Buyck, First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dün
Ian McDonald, Government of Canada
Norman Snowshoe, Government of the Northwest Territories (Alternate)

Deana Lemke, Executive Director
Matthias Lemke, Assistant

Presenters

Mike Sutor, Environment Yukon
Kelly Milner, Communication Consultant
Peter Evans, Trailmark
David King, Trailmark

Regret

Karen Clyde, Government of Yukon

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Chair Joe Tetlich called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. and opened the meeting with prayer.

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and accepted.

***Motion to accept agenda
Moved by Norman Snowshoe
Seconded by Ian McDonald
Carried***

Review Minutes and Action Items

The minutes of the February 11, 2019 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Motion to approve minutes of February 11, 2019 meeting

Moved by Alice McCulley

Seconded by Ian McDonald

Carried

Deana Lemke reviewed the status of action items.

Chair's Update

Joe Tetlichy updated the Board about his attendance and participation in a GRRB Gwich'in harvest monitoring workshop on March 27, 2019 which was facilitated by Robert Charlie. The goal of the workshop was to improve harvest data collection and to harmonize processes among the participating organizations. Joe noted that Amy Amos was successful in obtaining two years of funding to support the initiative of streamlining harvest data gathering via several additional workshops.

Regarding the International Porcupine Caribou Board's response to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to implement an oil and gas leasing program within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain, Joe related that the US members do not seem to be comfortable with raising specific concerns, thus preventing the international board from operating in a meaningful way. The Canadian members of the international board have discussed ways in which they can go on record to highlight concerns around international treaty obligations and potential adverse effects to herd. It was decided to send an email to the US co-chair suggesting using email to make a record of the position of each of the board members. An email to this effect was sent on May 3, 2019 but no acknowledgement has been received to date.

Joe related that he recently facilitated several information sessions about Porcupine Caribou for children at the Old Crow school. He noted that the kids were very engaged and their comments and participation made it obvious that they are very informed about caribou.

The Board was advised that VGFN has hired a caribou coordinator, Elizabeth Staples, based in North Vancouver. Elizabeth will be meeting with Deana Lemke on Wednesday, May 15, 2019 and she will be meeting with Joe in Old Crow during Caribou Days.

On behalf of PCMB, Deana Lemke attended and presented at a cumulative effects workshop in Whitehorse entitled Total Impact – Our Collective Footprint 2019. It was held on March 12 and 13 and approximately 100 people attended.

Lindsay Staples chaired the event and a summary will be prepared. Mike Sutor also attended and presented at this workshop. In his presentation he spoke about the cumulative effects work done by Don Russell and some of the challenges related to measuring cumulative effects.

Joe noted that he is planning to attend a Dene Nation meeting at Midway Lakes just prior to the Midway Lakes music festival during the last week of July 2019.

Administrative and Financial Report

Deana Lemke reviewed the financial report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2019 and the financial variance report for the current year to date. She noted that Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program (CCHAP) funding was received for the scoping portion of the traditional knowledge (TK) project. Some of this funding was spent during last fiscal year and the remainder is being carried over to the current fiscal year. TK project funding requirements for the current year will be discussed in more detail.

Deana explained that she has agreed to help coordinate a celebration related to the signing of the Native User Agreement (NUA). Finding a date that works for all of the Parties has proven difficult and is still being organized.

The status of the Board's funding agreements was reviewed.

The Board appointed M. McKay as auditor for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Motion to a appoint M. McKay as auditor for the 2018-19 fiscal year

Moved by Ian McDonald

Seconded by Robert Charlie

Carried

Herd Update

GNWT Update

Norman Snowshoe stated that Lila Voudrach from the Inuvik office has been appointed to take Marsha Branigan's place as the GNWT member.

Regarding herd update information, Norman advised that there have been no changes since Marsha Branigan's last update. Marsha will remain on the technical committee related to the EIS for the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program until it has concluded.

No check stations have been required because the caribou have not been available for harvest. A funding agreement to run a check station will be put in place if caribou return this summer.

Government of Yukon Update

Mike Suitor provided the following update:

- Mike and his department have spent much time preparing for and managing technical contracts regarding a response to the EIS. While the initial response has been completed, Mike stated that this will be an ongoing file and that long-term involvement will be required.
- Work is underway on the eastern North Slope in collaboration with WMAC(NS) and Round River Conservation Studies on PCH habitat models and the mapping of herd migration paths.
- Mike assisted with the Total Impact – Our Collective Footprint 2019 workshop. He focused his comments on the Forty Mile and Porcupine Caribou herds and the cumulative effects studies that have been done on these herds. He also spoke about the importance of keeping migration paths open and managing development.
- Mike noted that Don Russell is working with Colin Daniel, an ecologist from Apex Resource Management Solutions, on assessing the entire PCH range and determining which areas are most sensitive to disturbance and what would happen to the herd if development occurred in these areas. The eastern North Slope has already been assessed as being very important to the PCH.
- CBC's *The Nature of Things* is hoping to film the herd as it migrates back to the North Slope. Mike is negotiating a reasonable amount of film footage in return for providing technical assistance.
- March fieldwork and collaring took place near the Whitestone and Miner Rivers. Most of the collars were deployed on cows. Martin Kienzler also assisted colleagues in Alaska with fieldwork in the Alaskan portion of the PCH range.
- So far, the PCH have not left their winter range. When the herd started moving north and encountered deeper snow, their movement stopped. This is possibly related to the amount of snow since the Fishing Branch area only had about 6" of snow cover.
- Mike pointed out that during spring capture work very few calves were seen. This was unexpected, since above average survival was recorded during the time right after calving.
- Last summer, ground sampling analysis related to trampling effects and grazing of muskox was conducted. This project is still underway. Summer student Kayla Arey was specifically hired to focus on muskox.

Traditional Knowledge (TK) Project

Kelly Milner provided an update on the TK project via teleconference. She explained that the project is being referred to as a data-mobilization plan because of the emphasis on using existing data. She also noted that the project will contribute TK to a PCH conservation plan and will be considered at future Annual Harvest Meetings.

PCMB's focus for TK data will be to determine where the caribou have been over time, what has changed in terms of herd distribution, and what changes have been noted in harvesting.

A scoping exercise was completed between January and March 2019. Each Party was asked to identify and quantify portions of their TK data that are specifically relevant to PCMB's project. Subsequently, with engagement from Trailmark, the existing TK knowledge bases of the Parties were assessed. Discussions were held with each Party about how their data might be used. Some communities have extensive TK data in digital formats.

The next steps are the development and signing of data-sharing agreements and assessments of how the data can be imported into the Trailmark platform. Both VGFN and GTC already have a process for data sharing.

Peter Evans and Dave King from Trailmark joined the conference call.

Dave King stated that VG and GTC have a very large amount of TK data in a useable format that is organized and indexed. Both organizations have indicated that they are ready and willing to move forward. He suggested that the next step be a pilot phase during which these high-value portions of data would be ingested into Trailmark. This would allow for a demonstration of a working model by September 2019 and give Parties and the Board a chance to see how the process can work. This work could be completed with the remainder of the CCHAP that was carried over into the current fiscal year.

Kelly stated that WMAC(NS) also holds a large amount of TK information; however, IGC needs to decide how they will engage in this process. IGC is having a meeting in September 2019 at which they could be given a presentation and demonstration of how the other Parties' data contributions have been used.

It was noted that Na-Cho Ny'ak Dun (NND) and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's (TH) TK data is not readily accessible and may not be relevant to PCMB's needs. TH may have some relevant data but not in an accessible format. To include these two Parties, the TK project would have to find a different way of making any relevant data accessible. Peter stated that since these Parties are currently not ready to participate, it may be best to address their potential inclusion during a subsequent phase in the project when gaps are analyzed and addressed.

Mike Sutor noted that requiring additional work of staff in the communities has already been flagged as a concern and should be kept to a minimum. However, thought should be given to developing opportunities for community involvement. Mike pointed out that the project was focused on digitally available TK and that

the scope has not been expanded to include additional TK material that is not in digital format. After the main phase of the project a gap analysis will be used to determine whether or not to digitize additional material.

Dave stated that Trailmark has begun preparation, setup and testing of their software for the scope of the TK project. It was noted that each Party contributing to the project wants to have access to their own data within Trailmark. Therefore, Trailmark is developing a closed network so that each Party as well as PCMB has their own instance of the software but that each instance can share information with the others. Each Party will be able to choose which data they will share or allow PCMB to access.

Board members inquired about the potential cost of each instance. Dave replied that there should be no cost to access the software, but that a subscription for the service is approximately \$600 per month.

In response to a question from Deana, Dave stated that the staff who will be working on batch uploading of TK data know how to assess the raw data and decide what to input and what to leave out. A master list or index will be used so that after ingesting the data the list can be verified within Trailmark. Scripts are used to run the ingesting process, but a technician parses the information afterward.

After meeting with technical staff in the communities Trailmark has no serious concerns or flags. Dave noted that the people they met with were enthusiastic about being able to develop this project, including the data-sharing agreements. There was general enthusiasm for the project and the manner in which it is planned. The only area of concern is around the issue of data sharing and how to ensure Parties' control over their data while providing PCMB with access.

Dave stated that it will be important to have the data-sharing agreements in place at the beginning of the project to ensure that there is no uncertainty about each group's control of their own data.

In response to questions about data security or data loss as a result of unpaid subscriptions, Dave noted that Trailmark is on the leading edge of data security and cloud storage. Any interactions between instances and subscriptions are encrypted. Any concerns will be addressed in the first stage of the project. If subscriptions are not updated, the data will remain intact. If a decision was made by a client not to continue, Trailmark would help to export the data eventually.

Joe Tetlich and Billy Storr stated that they are still not clear about the product the Board will be getting. They also expressed concerns about the concept of paying for the acquisition of data that Parties already have. Joe stated that he would like PCMB to be involved in project logistics in order for it to be most cost-effective.

Stephen Buyck stated that he sees the value of having TK information readily accessible. He felt that the Board should submit proposals for the funding required for the annual subscription costs.

Several Board members expressed concerns about ongoing future costs for accessing data after all of the costs expended on the project itself. It was agreed

to consider future costs in more detail at the next meeting in September, after the pilot phase of the project is close to complete.

Ian recounted that one of the main reasons the Board supported this project is to address the TK component of a conservation plan and to also be in a position to bring more TK to the table at AHMs. He felt that the project is well suited for the conservation plan but is unsure if it will be able to deliver TK for the annual herd assessments at the AHM. Given this, the Board may not want to pay an annual fee beyond the development of the conservation plan.

Norman Snowshoe stated that while Trailmark did not do a good job of explaining the project or presenting the information, their solution looks like a vital tool that would be a component for good decision-making.

Stephen noted that TK is mentioned in most chapters of First Nations' land claim agreements and needs to be given equal weight to scientific knowledge. Since climate change is affecting elders' ability to understand seasonal indicators, the more work that can be done on TK the more it can benefit us. He suggested looking at some examples of how Trailmark has worked with other First Nations and stated that they should be in attendance at the next meeting.

Deana expressed her hope that the First Nation Parties would see the value for themselves in this project as it is information that will help all stakeholders to manage the herd. PCMB is trying to do something that is also valuable to the Parties and it should be seen as a collaborative project. She suggested having a working group to help give board input between meetings; however, it was members' preference to include everyone in the discussions.

Billy Storr suggested moving ahead with the pilot project and seeing the outcome of how the data is presented and how useful it is. He felt that after this milestone the Board could either end the project or see if the other user groups are interested in continuing to build on it.

Alice McCulley stated that she sees value in getting historical information about where caribou used to be. For example, it is known that NND have become moose people instead of caribou people over time and the same is true for TH. It would be good to have data to corroborate this. Alice also wondered if one of Trailmark's existing clients could demonstrate how they use this product. She suggested that TH may have important TK on successfully adapting to changes in caribou distribution (by shifting use of species) that other communities may find useful in the future if PCH become less available in Canada.

Billy stated that he would feel more comfortable if Deana and Kelly met with Trailmark to provide guidance on how to get the best results for the end of the pilot project.

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)

WMAC(NS) staff Kaitlin Wilson and Allison Thompson provided an update regarding the progress on the *Wildlife Management and Conservation Plan* via teleconference. WMAC(NS) is set to release an updated version of the plan later this year. The updated plan will better reflect current conservation requirements of the Yukon North Slope. The draft is being prepared for a consultation and review process over the summer of 2019 and it is hoped that the consultation will be complete by fall 2019. Kaitlin and Allison will likely be available to provide an update and answer questions at the September PCMB meeting in Whitehorse.

In March 2019, WMAC(NS) submitted a proposal to the Canada Nature Fund regarding protection of the eastern North Slope with the designation of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). No response to the proposal is expected prior to June 2019. WMAC(NS) hopes to facilitate an open negotiation of the three stakeholder Parties to get consensus on this form of protection. Numerous letters of support for this initiative have been received.

Arctic Refuge development

Ian McDonald shared information provided by Craig Machtans regarding the status of Alaska's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The United States currently has two options: they could create a final EIS and release a record of decision after 30 days or they could create a supplementary EIS and review the entire process again. There is no indication that the latter option is being considered.

Mike Sutor noted that BLM did request additional information. While the information was already provided last year it was an indication that additional scrutiny is taking place.

Ian explained that the final EIS will likely be released in June or July 2019 and a record of decision would consequently be released in August or September. Apparently there will be 30 days to comment on the final EIS, and then the record of decision will be created. A judicial review of the process can only be initiated after the record of decision has been released. Ian noted that even a judicial review may not stop the leasing process.

Concerns about the seismic program were noted and a separate assessment for the seismic program is underway. An Incidental Take Statement related to polar bears by the US Environmental Protection Agency is expected to be released in response to the seismic program component.

Ian explained that the US Fish and Wildlife Service selected D2 as the preferred alternative. While the US Fish and Wildlife Service was critical of the EIS, other

state agencies were very pro-development and wanted the least amount of restrictions possible in the EIS.

Canada is still heavily involved in ongoing government to government-to-communications regarding this issue. A number of other groups have asked BLM to produce a supplementary EIS but there is no indication that this request will be honored.

Mike Sutor explained that if the process moves forward to the point that leasing occurs then each of the subsequent projects will be subject to its own EIS.

Species at Risk designation and process

Deana reviewed the letter from the Board supporting the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) designation of barren-ground caribou (BGC) which requests that the Board, rather than Canada, lead development of a recovery strategy. The letter noted that much work has already been completed and that most of the components of a strategy already exist.

Ian noted that the recovery strategy should include available TK throughout the document as similar documents have been criticized in the past for not including TK throughout the report.

Robert stated that he will be attending a meeting with Canada which is being held with the intent of obtaining indigenous input about boreal caribou. He suggested that he can keep the Board informed about how Canada's process works for engaging indigenous groups.

PCH Conservation Plan

Mike Sutor stated that he is currently working on assembling the components of a recovery strategy. Migration paths of the PCH have been identified and most of the work required to update the sensitive habitats report is complete. The information now needs to be compiled into a draft report. Mike related that Katie Orndahl from Northern Arizona University is currently studying biomass and vegetation in the PCH range and her work will also contribute to identifying critical habitat.

Mike noted that not all of the required work needs to be completed in order to produce a recovery strategy as long as any gaps have been identified and progress is being made to address those. Mike pointed out that it would be very beneficial to obtain assistance from a contractor who has experience in writing plans such as this.

Shannon Stotyn will be asked to attend the next PCMB meeting in Whitehorse to provide additional information regarding the content and structure of a conservation plan.

The Board reviewed a timeline drafted by Karen Clyde for a community consultation process for the conservation plan. The Board agreed that the timelines will need to be updated. While the community consultation could be completed sooner, the overall timeline could span two to three more years. The community consultation plan should take into consideration the specific times of the year that work best for involving communities. Partner agencies and PCMB stakeholders should be communicated with and included in the process.

The Board recommended separating the draft letter to Parties regarding the TK project and the conservation plan into two different letters so as to be less confusing. The consultation phase will be discussed again at the September PCMB meeting.

Harvest Management Strategy

Deana informed the Board that NND and VGFN's replies to the Board's AHM recommendations are still outstanding.

A letter from GTC regarding concerns about the population model was reviewed.

Action 19-3: Draft a letter to GTC with copies to Parties for review at September 2019 PCMB meeting. The letter should outline the communication materials and information sessions that have previously been provided to the Parties regarding the population model at past Annual Harvest Meetings.

Deana reminded the Board that the next Annual Harvest Meeting will take place on February 11 and 12, 2020 in Dawson with PCMB meeting to follow on February 13.

The Native User Agreement (NUA) has been finalized and signed off by leadership. A news release and media package are ready but will not be released until a NUA signing celebration takes place, which PCMB has offered to help coordinate. Currently the first week of June is being considered. If this week does not work out then an agreeable day in August will be sought.

Deana noted that the next step in the Harvest Management Strategy process will be developing agreements with government regarding harvest allocation. Allocation and related issues were deferred to a Native User Commission in the NUA; therefore, the Board will be interested in seeing how the other Parties respond to these developments.

GRRB Update on “Commercialization” consultation

Amy Amos updated the Board on the outcome of GRRB’s community consultations, noting that GRRB was asked to help define the meaning of commercialization of wildlife. The first community consultation was undertaken in December 2018, and Joe Tetlichich participated in this. Amy noted that there was excellent participation in all communities and that a “What we Heard” report was produced. The report was subsequently shared with the Board. Amy felt that the most significant variances in feedback were related to age groups and not to communities.

Funding for this project was received from GNWT’s Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) and spans a period of two years. The initial workshop will be held in Inuvik from July 9 to 11, 2019. Enough funding is available to assist four RRCs and two HTC’s with costs associated with attending the workshop. The goal of the workshop is to produce a first draft which can be circulated for review. The workshop will be facilitated by Linda Young who really understands all of the issues because she previously assisted with drafting the *Wildlife Act* for the Northwest Territories. Amy offered to share the applicable PCMA information and PCMB’s guidelines with Linda for her consideration prior to the workshop.

The second year of the process and budget will involve two rounds of community consultations which will include a review and revisions to the first draft.

Amy stated that this initiative has been well-received in the communities. While there are varying opinions about the definition of commercial use and potential restrictions, the communities appreciate why this matter needs to be addressed. She noted that while this process is focused on the Gwich’in, IGC has been included in conversations because the Inuvialuit are traditional trading partners of the Gwich’in and are therefore very interested in observing this process.

Harold Frost explained that in Old Crow people are compensated for the cost of harvesting via gasoline or ammunition, not the exchange of cash. If a community hunt is organized then the gas is paid for and young men go out to harvest and a feast is held without any issues or concerns.

Billy stated that people don’t want to take something without showing some appreciation; therefore, it is respectful to accept something if they want to give it.

Harvest data collection

Amy explained that Janet Boxwell is on leave until August 2019. While GRRB has the most robust harvest survey of all user groups, participation is an issue. Funding has also been an issue in the past. ENR has recently committed to a three-year funding program and GRRB hopes that this will continue in the future.

A regional harvest workshop facilitated by Robert Charlie was held to analyze issues with lack of harvester participation. Notes from this workshop will be reviewed and summarized with the intent of increasing participation. The possibility of asking additional questions about additional species will be considered.

Joe stated that the qualifications and suitability of the individuals doing the data collection are very important and need to be taken into consideration.

Norman Snowshoe felt that retention and continuity is also a challenge and that qualified individuals should be paid accordingly.

Billy Storr added that harvesters should still submit a report and be eligible for prizes even if they were not successful or did not hunt.

Amy pointed out that reporting is voluntary and that GRRB does not have the right or the authority to enforce or expect participation.

PCMB Communications

Two sample videos promoting awareness about the importance of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge were reviewed. The first was a new animation of PCH annual migratory behavior, highlighting the annual convergence on or near the 1002 lands during June. The other was a narrated video containing PCH-related footage acquired from BBC and other sources, highlighting the importance of protected areas for the PCH and the need for continued collaboration of government Parties and stakeholders.

Board members provided general support and some specific feedback on several editorial improvements.

Alaska Wilderness Society

Deana Lemke informed the Board that the Alaska Wilderness Society approached PCMB regarding the creation of a 3D animation which would show caribou migrating onto the coastal plain using actual satellite data. Mike Suitor felt that Alaska Fish and Game would have concerns about sharing the data with a lobbyist organization.

It was agreed that Deana and Mike will hold a conference call with the Alaska Wilderness Society to explore whether they would be willing to have PCMB take the lead on this idea and control the end product.

Matthew Lien “Voices of the Refuge” proposal

Deana reviewed a proposal by Matthew Lien to create a social media product focusing on drawing attention to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Board members noted that they would like to see inclusion of individuals from communities as well, not only residents of Whitehorse. Some suggested broadening the scope to talk about caribou in general because many people are

not aware of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Joe felt that school children could also be included. This proposal will be explored further with Matthew Lien in the future.

PCMB Website review

Mike Sutor advocated for making historical herd movement maps available on the PCMB Website and Ian McDonald stated that the graph showing the historical herd size needs to be updated and made easier to understand.

Members stated that the Board needs to be visibly involved in highlighting the importance of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. They felt that by using the Website to do this PCMB can add value and be seen as being involved in the process. Members felt that doing a good job of this is important.

Website options will be investigated and reported on at the next meeting.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for September 26 and 27, 2019 in Whitehorse, Yukon.

It was suggested that Liz Staples, the new VGFN caribou coordinator, be invited to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.