

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

April 29 and 30, 2016
Sittichinli Complex
Aklavik, NWT

In attendance

Members/Staff

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

Presenters/Guests

Kelly Milner
Don Russell
Pauline Frost

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 introduced new Board member Harold Frost Jr. (Hal) and noted that he is from a family in Old Crow who still traps and harvests traditionally.

Review Agenda

The agenda was reviewed by the Board and accepted. A discussion of the Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines was added to the agenda.

Motion to accept agenda
Moved by Art Christiansen
Seconded by Marsha Branigan
Carried

Review Minutes

The Minutes of the February 10 and 11, 2016 meeting were reviewed and approved by the Board.

Motion to accept Minutes of the February 10 and 11, 2016 meeting as distributed

Moved by Stephen Buyck

Seconded by Ian McDonald

Carried

Chair's Update

Joe related that he attended a Tanana Chiefs conference in Fairbanks, Alaska in March. Collaborating with First Nation harvesters on the Alaska side of the border could be seen as an add-on to the HMP. Information provided by the International Porcupine Caribou Board indicates that there is only a very small Gwich'in harvest of Porcupine Caribou in Alaska. While the Alaskan harvest is not viewed as a significant issue, it is still beneficial to foster good relationships with them, and they are quite open to talking about the HMP.

After the Tanana Chiefs conference, Joe visited the Dempster to engage with harvesters. Some caribou were abandoned between Ogilvie and Engineer Creek. No charges had been laid, but hunters were suspected. This shows the importance of additional education within the user communities. Joe has been encouraging the communities to work with their harvesters regarding respectful hunting.

Joe went to Old Crow for a culture camp on April 12 and 13 and talked about the caribou with a group of youth. A lot of the young people in Old Crow are connected to the caribou; children as young as 10 and 12 are already skinning caribou and hunting. Joe discussed the Board's mandate and some of the issues dealt with at the Board level.

Joe will be attending the North American Caribou Workshop in Thunder Bay in May. The Gwich'in Gathering in Arctic Village will be held in July, and Joe will likely attend it to talk about successes and challenges of caribou management on the Canadian side of the border.

Wilbert Firth related that during the caribou workshop in Fort McPherson, he brought up using the appropriate caliber of rifle for hunting. What to do with the bones and leftover parts came up as a concern. The community is thinking about finding a location to deposit bones and hides. A sight-in-your-rife event was also held. Many people attended and even students came out and participated in learning how to skin and work with caribou.

Joe noted that in Fort McPherson there is a concern about the amount of cows being harvested. Concerns were also raised about hunters coming from the Yellowknife area. It is unclear whether they have the right to harvest PCH. They may need permission to hunt on Category A lands of Trondek Hwech'in, Vuntut Gwitchin, and Nacho Ny'ak Dun. Wilbert pointed out that Dene and Metis are mentioned in the PCMA and that there needs to be more discussion on this.

Administrative and Financial Report

Executive Director Deana Lemke reviewed the status of current Board memberships. Art Christiansen's term has expired. Trondek Hwech'in is in the process of addressing the vacancy. Nicole McCutchen's term is being renewed for an additional five-year term. For VGFN, Harold Frost Jr.'s membership has just begun and William Josie will remain the alternate until 2018. For GNWT, Stephen Charlie's membership has expired and no new alternate has yet been appointed. Steven Buyck's appointment will be renewed shortly and Edward Patterson will be appointed as alternate for NND.

Deana informed the Board of an invitation to attend a meeting regarding research and monitoring activities in Yukon with NASA's Arctic Boreal Vulnerability Experiment and POLAR Knowledge Canada, which is being held in Whitehorse on May 16. While the invitation was extended to management boards, the content will be of a technical nature, so a request will be made for Mike Suitor to participate.

Mike Suitor and Deana have completed the interview process for hiring a STEP student under the Johnny Charlie scholarship. A young Yukon woman named Amanda Mervyn, who is in her third year of studies, has been hired. She will be working under the direction of the regional office in Dawson starting at the end of May.

Year-end financials for 2015-16 were reviewed. Deana noted that during the past fiscal year, the Board used more of the surplus funds than ever before. At the end of the fiscal year there were some cash-flow issues. Funding under new agreements does not start until the current fiscal year has ended, but there was a need to pay significant invoices by March 31.

The draft budget was reviewed. Final approval was deferred until after the Board discusses cumulative effects and communication presentations.

Herd Update

Government of the NWT Update

Marsha Branigan provided the following update to the Board:

- The hunter education event hosted in Fort McPherson was successful and worthwhile attending
- More body condition samples are being received this year and they are currently being processed
- It is unclear at this time if a check station or monitoring will happen with the Tetlit RRC
- Under the new *Wildlife Act* there is still the need to define what “commercial” means. A good question to the Native User Agreement audience would be: At what point would a transaction be considered commercial? More discussions with IGC and GTC need to take place to determine how they want to proceed.

Government of Yukon Update

Deana Lemke relayed information from Martin Kienzler that more collars have been deployed. Mike Suitor and Martin are currently both doing regular field work. A census will be attempted again this year.

Nicole McCutchen stated that the work of back-casting the population model's outputs, as requested at the AHM, is now on Troy Hegel's work plan. The results will hopefully be ready for the next AHM.

Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines

Deana Lemke reported that she had a discussion with Steve Baryluk about trade and barter concerns that were raised.

Marsha Branigan stated that her department is aware of the issues with caribou selling that is currently happening, but the individuals involved would have to be selling to non-native people for it to be a violation. ENR cannot charge anyone based on guidelines.

Billy Storr noted that different communities have different values when it comes to bartering. Making rules that work for everyone is not an easy task. Billy also explained that he has been part of discussions about trade and bartering in the past. It has come up a number of times and needs to be dealt with. He felt that it would be good if the Board could officially suggest that IGC and GTC talk about the matter and then state how they feel about the current Sale, Trade and Barter Guidelines.

Joe Tetlichy pointed out that it actually falls under the mandate and responsibility of the RRCs.

Steven Buyck suggested that the Board ask for a council resolution about the matter which PCMB can then support.

Billy Storr expressed that the majority of community members have good principles when it comes to sharing meat. Most give it away without expecting anything back. However, a few people in a community look at selling meat as a money-making opportunity. He suggested that the Board write a letter to the HTC's and RRC's, mentioning that some concerns about trade and barter activities have been raised.

Ian McDonald agreed with the idea of a letter being sent. He felt it worth noting that the Board developed the guidelines because the PCMA directed it, and that a lot of consultation went into the guidelines.

Action 16-01: A letter will be sent to IGC, and a separate letter to user groups, HTC's and RRC's, to advise them of the concerns and ask where they stand on the issue.

Cumulative Effects Project

Don Russell joined the meeting via teleconference. During the last several years, Don has been focusing on the Bathurst herd in NWT because of the potential for development in the range of that herd. Most of the funding for his work has come from NWT's Cumulative Impacts Monitoring Program (CIMP).

Don's cumulative effects assessment tool is based on an energy/protein model. Caribou health and herd health is primarily affected by the animals' ability to receive adequate energy and protein. Environmental changes in the herd's range can affect availability of suitable vegetation or disturbances can cause the animals to be more vigilant, forage less and thus take in less food.

The body weight of a caribou is affected by encounters with disturbances and affects calf birth rate and mortality. The energy/protein model uses inputs about herd movement and information about the landscape to project a herd's population trend. Migration and movement data from satellite collars is used to project encounters and can be used to assess the impact of existing and new development in a herd's range.

The model thus helps quantify how minor changes in animal behavior affects the trend of the overall population. It could also be used to assess how effective seasonal closures or other mitigation efforts would be.

Various levels of development in the range of the Bathurst herd, as well as various climate scenarios, were run through the model to analyze cumulative impacts to the herd. A variety of harvest scenarios were also incorporated. Similar studies could be done for the Porcupine Caribou herd.

Don provided an update about his ongoing work on cumulative effects modelling. In its initial stages, the tool was built to integrate effects of industrial development, climate change, and harvest policies. The assessment tool has been further developed and now provides the ability to model the effect of encounters with activities and development, and run the energy/protein model based on projected encounters. The tool can run scenarios based on actual developments and potential development. In addition, climate data from 1979 to 2015 have been analyzed and summarized to track and compare what is happening with climate.

Currently, Don is the only one who can run the model, but his associate, Joan Eamer has been working on an interface that will allow users to run various scenarios. It is hoped that within a year, virtually anyone should be able to run the model with minimal training. Customizations will be required when adding factors for additional development or other changes in the range of the herd.

In response to the need outlined in the North Yukon Land Use Plan and recent concerns raised around Northern Cross' project, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has contacted Don to see if he could do some background work so best practices can be established. This effort would complement work on cumulative effects and aid in analysis of how mitigation might affect the herd.

The calculations within the model are largely based on caribou interactions with oil and gas development in Prudhoe Bay. The movement component of the model can be categorized into various types — for example, moving through a zone of influence, staying in it, or never encountering any disturbances.

Since each herd has specific sensitivities, the model would need to be updated with PCH data. Herd-specific baseline data would need to be compiled in order to have a starting point. The baseline data can then be used to factor in the herd's exposure to changes caused by development, climate change, harvest and the herd's coping ability, and then assess the overall potential impact.

The PCH is a wide-ranging herd with three or four separate winter ranges; therefore, the herd has many more variables than other herds. Overall thresholds will be much harder to determine. However, one could specify hypothetical scenarios — for example, the effect if the herd stayed in the Eagle Plains area for a specific period of time. Another example would be to focus on accessing the impacts of the 20 proposed wells in the Eagle Plains area.

Don stated that instead of trying to determine an overall threshold, he prefers to do risk assessments using baseline data to determine the probability of the herd being affected.

Don provided a demonstration of the interface to the cumulative effects model and provided a web link to look at the local development to date.

While Don has worked with Troy Hegel on the population model and communicated with PCTC and the IPCB about the model, next steps for future modelling work are unclear.

Harvest Management Plan Update

Responses to PCMB's AHM recommendations were reviewed. Three have been received — one from each government. IGC advised that they sent their letter recently. Reminders to the remaining Parties have been sent out.

The IP update is nearing completion. Once the new formatting has been finalized, Lindsey Staples will do a cover letter and it will get sent out.

PCMB Chair appointment process

Joe Tetlichy stated that he has been with the Board for 21 years now and would like to continue serving as Chair. He proposed that the Board reappoint him for an additional five years.

While some members fully supported Joe's automatic reappointment, others shared concerns about the perception that could be created if the Board did not follow its own guidelines, and that amending the guidelines at this meeting would appear to be self-serving.

Deana Lemke read the letter that was sent out during the last appointment process, which included an attachment with the appointment guidelines.

Marsha Branigan suggested that the Board write a letter to Parties stating that Joe has put his name forward for reappointment, and ask if Parties support that or whether they prefer to provide alternative names for nomination.

Motion to send a letter to Parties regarding the PCMB Chair appointment process.

Moved by Billy Storr

Seconded by Wilbert Firth

Carried

Yukon Wildlife Act Regulation changes

The joint letter from Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and PCMB proposing regulation changes to the minister was reviewed. Deana Lemke stated that a reply from the minister, accepting the proposed regulation changes, has just been received.

YESAB review of Northern Cross

PCMB was recently notified of a court proceeding in which NCY is requesting that its YESAB application be returned to the jurisdiction of Dawson's regional YESAB office, stating that the action of escalating it to the YESAB executive committee was not fair and that YESAB erred in law.

Copies of NCY's affidavits and court application were reviewed.

Pauline Frost, consultant for VGFN, joined the meeting via teleconference and provided VGFN's perspective on Northern Cross' court application. She explained that stakeholder First Nations are collaborating in response to NCY's court application because they have a vested interest in what is happening with caribou management. They are considering whether to obtain intervener status. While they do not want to interfere with a functioning process, if the request was referred to a regional level, it may better address First Nation concerns about access and caribou management.

Each First Nation has technical advisors and legal counsel working on this file. While the First Nations are not opposed to development as long as it is safe for the environment and the caribou are protected, they would like NCY's application to be reviewed by the YESAB executive committee and will push to have that happen. They are looking at cost sharing to address matters of common concern.

The pending judicial decision will determine whether NCY's application will be returned to Dawson's jurisdiction rather than the YESAB executive committee. Concerns about the caribou, caribou habitat and the effect of access are still unaddressed. Pauline noted that there is room in the process if PCMB wanted to sit in on discussions about what is happening.

After concluding the discussion with Pauline, Board members agreed that PCMB is not in a position to contribute financially, but could provide a caribou management perspective to interveners.

Deana noted that PCMB can access the public registry to stay updated about the proceeding and could also file as an intervener and have partial involvement at a later date if it would be beneficial.

The Board agreed not to take any action at this time. Deana will advise the Board if any additional urgent information is received and will let Pauline know that the Board would appreciate being part of discussions in the future.

Action 16-02: Pauline Frost will be advised that the Board would appreciate being part of discussions in the future.

EMR Caribou Guidelines

Nicole McCutchen stated that the general understanding is that EMR is going to develop best management practices specific to oil and gas activities in collaboration with Vuntut Gwitchin and with input from Environment Yukon. Developing best management practices is consistent with annual priorities identified under the North Yukon Land Use Plan. This was brought forward in YESAB's final recommendation report, which recommended that NCY's project should be referred to the YESAB executive committee.

The reason that the Department of Energy Mines and Resources is involved rather than Environment Yukon is because the matter is connected to the North Yukon Land Use Plan. The guidelines are proposed to be developed by a contractor in collaboration with the Department of Energy Mines and Resources and Vuntut Gwitchin, with input from Environment Yukon. Ideally the department will contact the Board for input at some point. Mike Sutor is already involved at the biologist level. It is likely that work on this will begin in fall 2016.

It was agreed to give the Department of Energy Mines and Resources an opportunity to approach the Board. If no communication is received, inquiries can be made.

Communication Strategy

Kelly Milner reviewed progress on the short-, medium-, and long-term priorities that were identified at the December 2013 PCMB meeting, which were incorporated into a communication plan.

All items have either been completed or are nearing completion. The following completed project tasks were noted:

- a social media presence has been established via Facebook and Twitter and tracking statistics are indicating good trends — almost 500 followers
- a series of ethical and respectful hunting posters was produced
- an educational puppet video was produced to address youth education about the Porcupine caribou
- the caribou school program package was reviewed and found to be very outdated and cumbersome; updating and simplification or replacing the program is required
- a positive article entitled *Managing the Herd* was published in *North of Ordinary* magazine in order to offset the negative coverage about caribou harvesting in another northern magazine
- content from the outdated Taiga website was moved to pcmb.ca and updated. Separate maps of caribou migration data were integrated into an animation and made available on the website

- a general information binder was designed and printed to replace the “about the PCMB” brochure (the map on the folder will need to be updated for future printing)

Communication tasks that are still underway:

- a caribou cookbook project was completed for educational purposes to show how all parts of the caribou can be used. The work was done in Old Crow in collaboration with Michele Genest and in partnership with VGFN; it includes both traditional and modern recipes
- banners and displays with harvest reporting and respectful harvesting
- a series of “score cards” to explain herd health indicators (calf survival, birth rate, bull:cow ratio, cow survival)
- two new posters, content for which was requested at the AHM: a caribou meat chart and an explanation of the “focus on harvesting bulls” concept
- Dempster maps to communicate changes regarding hunting along the Dempster need to be updated

Potential new items discussed:

- communication for the general public about how the population estimator works and how it relates to other decision-making tools used by the Board — perhaps via a white-board animation
- sale, trade and barter educational information
- Inuvialuit cooking workshop in NWT with the intent of bringing in people from different communities, also making it available to schools
- a caribou-specific butchering video to replace the bison butchering video on pcmb.ca.

Arctic Borderlands

Michael Svoboda presented an update of Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Society’s (ABEKS) recent activities, as related to PCMB.

Michael explained that ABEKS is not a harvest-reporting program but is about getting together science and traditional knowledge about changes in the range of the PCH. ABEKS was set up in 1994. Since then, various governmental frameworks have been set up. Therefore, a need arose to see where ABEKS best fits in post-land claims. Available funding was put to use in determining how traditional knowledge is used in decision-making, specifically with respect to the PCH Harvest Management Plan.

During this process, the usefulness of traditional knowledge-based caribou data was analyzed. Client needs and long-term usefulness of the data was assessed. The PCTC and Don Russell were involved in analyzing ABEKS data. They also evaluated how the data gets applied to the HMP, whether it meshes with the

HMP framework, and how it gets applied to decision-making. Challenges of data collection, methods of collection, and the eventual usefulness of data was also discussed.

Key outcomes of the discussions were:

- Regular analysis of caribou indicators will help identify patterns and trends
- Consistent, long-term data collection will improve results
- Survey results are a valid form of data only if methods outlined in manual are followed
- Analysis of ABEKS data should be done prior to submitting to PCTC
- Timing of survey should align with caribou year

PCTC requested that ABEKS perform some analysis on the data with a focus on caribou-related indicators, instead of just sending the raw data. This was a good indicator that when data requests are received, ABEKS should not just hand over the data but also assist with interpretation.

ABEKS interviews approximately 20 main harvesters in each community. During the last three to four years, some value is being provided by analysis of the data. Now there is a need to make decisions about what areas to focus on and make adjustments if needed.

Michael displayed a number of sample graphs based on the latest information of moose and rabbit data from the database.

How to integrate the information into decision-making needs to be determined. The long-term dataset also has to be turned into meaningful information.

Billy Storr explained that the community picks the harvesters who are active most of the time. He also stated that it would be good to see what information ABEKS collects, compared to what PCMB is interested in measuring. Community members are comfortable with the current interviewers. Trust would have to be built up with any new people or programs.

Strategic Framework

The updated Strategic Framework five-year plan was reviewed and updated by the Board, along with the status of priorities in the Board's work plan.

Discussion arose around how to measure the success of communications. The Board agreed to gather feedback and find ways to measure success regarding the effectiveness of Board communications before building the next communication plan.

Kelly Milner commented on the review of the PCMB School Program and noted that the existing program is too old, outdated and cumbersome. The Board would

need to think about how to provide concise information in line with what schools would actually use. It would be necessary to work with the Department of Education to build it into the public school curriculum. As this would be a very extensive project, it was agreed not to address it at this time due to more immediate priorities.

Finalization of Budget

The draft budget for 2016-17 was reviewed, adjusted and finalized.

Motion to approve the revised budget

Moved by Stephen Buyck

Seconded by Billy Storr

Carried

Next Meeting and Closing Prayer

Dates for the next Board meeting will be determined based on member availability. The meeting will be hosted by NND and held at Ethel Lake, with a community meeting in Mayo during one of the evenings.

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