

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

Via Zoom

December 18, 2020

In attendance

Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Robert Charlie, Gwich'in Tribal Council
Stephen Buyck, First Nation of Na-cho Nyäk Dün
Alice McCulley, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council
Karen Clyde, Government of Yukon
Shannon Stotyn, Government of Canada
Ian McDonald, Government of Canada (Alternate)
Kirby Meister, Government of Yukon (Alternate)

Deana Lemke, Executive Director
Matthias Lemke, Assistant

Presenters and Guests

Mike Sutor, Environment Yukon
Jen Smith, Consultant

Call to Order

Chair Joe Tetlich called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

Conservation Plan planning workshop

Jennifer Smith provided a review of the Board's previous comments and direction provided during the Conservation Plan (CP) workshop at the February 2020 PCMB meeting. Additionally, Jennifer reviewed aspects of the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) requirements that are related to the creation of the conservation plan, existing management methods and processes, and the information gaps identified in the GAP analysis which was completed in 2017.

Mike Sutor noted that lichen maps are still being updated. More field data will be obtained in the summer of 2021 and will be used to refine the lichen model. He also stated that Environmental Dynamics Inc. is conducting habitat-related work which will contribute to the body of PCH habitat knowledge. Mike estimated that it will take another 1 ½ years to complete and compile all of the habitat-related information.

While it was noted that the conservation plan for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was updated in 2015, Jennifer stated that the management initiatives in the CP will be limited to the Canadian portion of the herd's range, while acknowledging that the entire range is important.

Jennifer pointed out that updating of the *Wildlife Management and Conservation Plan* for the North Slope will result in enhanced protection of Porcupine Caribou habitat.

Beginning with Vuntut National Park, other existing parks, special management areas and protected areas in the herd's range were reviewed. It was noted that the *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan* also considers the Porcupine Caribou herd (PCH) and addresses oil and gas development in the PCH range.

Karen Clyde noted that during the upcoming implementation of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* some areas will likely be identified as Special Management Areas and others as Integrated Management Areas. She stated that input toward this planning process can be connected to and influenced by the CP planning process.

Jennifer pointed out that plans such as the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and the Dawson regional land use plan, which is currently being developed, need to be taken into consideration as the CP is being developed.

Kirby Meister pointed out that the 16 km wide corridor along the Dempster Highway has unique regulations under the *Area Development Act* and that it would be good to make note of that.

Jennifer confirmed that the CP will be an overarching plan and will take existing land-based plans that overlap with the PCH range into consideration. The PCMB will need to acknowledge and understand how existing protected areas relate to both the PCH and its habitat requirements. Various aspects of potential change due to climate change or development, for example, will also need to be considered.

The goals for the CP will be related to the following:

- Needs of the herd
- Landscape that supports the herd
- Community connection (food, culture, community health)
- Cooperative management
- Changes (climate, landscape, social)

Jennifer explained that it would be ideal if the CP was limited to approximately 60 pages. It should contain enough information to provide guidance to managers and the PCMB, but not be overly detailed and prescriptive. For additional context and information, the CP can refer to and rely on companion documents such as a methods report and an implementation plan.

The CP needs to contribute PCH-specific information to a national management plan and its contents should provide direction to PCMB, PCMA Parties, and stakeholders on herd and habitat management. It should provide a common vision and incorporate shared values from all communities.

Jennifer then reviewed the envisioned methods for CP plan development and TK integration. Components and steps of the community engagement were summarized as follows:

- 1) Introduction to communities
- 2) Information gathering and TK verification (workshop style)
- 3) Confirmation of 'what we heard' and review components of a draft plan and demonstration of science/TK integration

A semi-virtual engagement will be planned with all PCH user communities. This will involve collaborating with RRCs, HTC's and other stakeholders.

Jennifer stated that thought will have to be put into the engagement of different interest groups within communities – for example, elders, youths, harvesters, and general community members.

The main method used to conduct the community engagement will likely be video conferencing with small groups facilitated by a local person in each community.

The next step in the process will be a “kickoff” via a letter to the Parties with introductory information, and additional communication materials will continue to be developed throughout the process.

Kirby noted that most licensed harvesters reside in Whitehorse. As well, there are some outfitters who work in the range of the PCH. He raised the question of whether or not these need to be included and, if so, how.

Deana Lemke felt that the approach would be similar to engagements PCMB has conducted on regulation changes and would involve collaboration with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Yukon Fish and Game Association, likely requiring some public meetings in Whitehorse.

Karen suggested that these stakeholders should not be included too late in the process so that they are able to be meaningfully engaged.

Jennifer then shared ideas about various methods that could be used to conduct community engagement, such as video calls, workshop options, surveys, use of a specific page on PCMB's website, or community portals or kiosks (stations with a laptop or iPad that holds presentations, surveys and voice recording as well as printed materials).

The following survey tools were briefly discussed: Typeform, Survey Monkey and Video Ask. Jennifer demonstrated Video Ask functionality, showing how questions could be

presented and how the user could choose to record their response. Posters, community radio or mailouts could be used to share information about where the kiosks are available.

It was noted that if Video Ask relies on an active internet connection during the process, there could there be an issue with upload capacity in communities.

Mike related that an iPad-based approach was successfully used for similar information-gathering in the Dawson area.

The current status of the TK data-mobilization project was briefly reviewed. The transfer of Inuvialuit data to Trailmark is still being worked on. Once the Inuvialuit data and the remaining Vuntut Gwitchin data has been ingested, the data analysis can begin. This analysis will be used to inform the CP and will need to be verified. In the meantime, a test case and demonstration of how data could be utilized still needs to be conducted.

A discussion took place around the meaning of TK data “validation”. It was clarified that validation does not imply having to justify or defend TK. Rather, it refers to confirming or verifying that the analysis has properly captured the significant content of the TK.

Jennifer then reviewed the feedback she has already received from PCMB regarding the CP’s vision and contents related to habitat, research, disturbance, threats, change, community access to food, and the concept of herd health being linked to community health.

Other guiding principles for the CP previously suggested by the Board were summarized. The CP should:

- Incorporate outcomes of TK data-mobilization project
- Recognize existing management plans and reflect the provisions of the PCMA
- Include community participation
- Build in the flexibility to allow for updating of plan components
- Address implementation of the CP separately, not within the CP
- Engage young hunters via education
- Be informed by circumstances and situations across the north
- Be of moderate length, easy to read, and attractive
- Include some traditional laws, stories, pictures, recipes, and use of indigenous languages
- Provide a habitat management approach for the entire Canadian range

The draft table of contents (TOC) of the CP was reviewed.

Regarding threats, a discussion took place about utilizing the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) threat assessment template. Shannon Stotyn suggested that a simplified table with applicable items could be used in the CP.

Regarding population objectives, the question was raised whether or not the population objectives defined in the Harvest Management Plan need to be refined further. Mike

commented that it would be a good idea to make a connection between population objectives and habitat.

Regarding distribution objectives and strategies, Shannon noted that the identification of the herd's critical habitat is an ongoing collaborative effort with partners. There was also discussion about implementation – for example, should it be outlined and attached to the same document or in a separate document? Would it include action plans? What would be the success measures? What would be appropriate intervals/timeframes for reviews?

Using Zoom's polling feature, attendees provided feedback regarding the CP's table of contents and input about the focus of the initial community engagement. Participants indicated that "recommendations for development" was a high priority for inclusion in the CP. Additionally, Alice McCulley noted that "connections to the herd" is also an important concept, because if people are not connected to the PCH they won't care about preserving it. She stated that while most Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens don't live in their traditional territory, they still have a connection to it.

Mike suggested that the CP include guidance around specific habitat and information about the herd's migration. As well, he felt that existing land use plans should be analyzed for any content related to the PCH.

Jennifer initiated a discussion about the CP's purpose, vision, and goals — what the plan should do and what we want it to achieve. It should provide information and guidance on habitat, identify critical habitats, and guide environment assessments.

Joe stated the need for awareness and education about community needs for conservation.

Norman Snowshoe emphasized the need to keep the herd healthy.

Karen stated that overlapping plans need to be tied together with common direction. The CP should address the needs of all user groups and be effective in unifying PCH-related goals.

There was discussion of whether specific research and monitoring needs should be included as a goal. Ian McDonald expressed that he is not in favor of listing specific research priorities in the CP.

Shannon noted that research and monitoring support the other aspects of management. She stated that monitoring is an aspect of research and it is needed to track the rate of changes. Knowledge obtained via research and monitoring is required to inform and incent management adaptations by communities. She also wondered which category "best management practices" should be part of in the TOC.

Karen stated that PCH-related research has been included in other plans. However, because there is a very large body of PCH research, it might be good to keep it separate from the CP. Additionally, Karen noted that while a lot of work has been

accomplished via the HMP, harvest should be highlighted in the CP as an important aspect of management. She also expressed the need for education in terms of the identification of overarching goals and commonalities that should be communicated to all stakeholder groups.

Shannon pointed out that the Porcupine Caribou Technical Committee (PCTC) also has an ongoing work plan. Therefore, the CP should acknowledge the PCTC and attempt to integrate the two processes.

In conclusion, Jennifer stated that questions arising from the upcoming community consultation can either be circulated to the Board or it may be advisable to have another planning session such as this one.

Next Meeting

A follow-up meeting to develop questions for the initial community engagement will be planned with a smaller group for February or March 2021.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.