



Wildlife Watch

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (NORTH SLOPE)
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Volume 7, Number 4

July 1997

Harvest Quota For Muskoxen Is Five

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) has recommended a harvest quota of five muskoxen on the Yukon North Slope in the 1997-1998 hunting season.

The recommendation has been sent to Eric Fairclough, the Yukon's Minister of Renewable Resources, and to Sheila Copps, the federal Minister of Heritage, responsible for Ivvavik National Park.

Aklavik HTC asked for quota

The Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee had asked that a quota be set because the people of Aklavik want to hunt muskoxen and because they are concerned about competition between muskoxen and the Porcupine caribou.

The quota will apply through the Yukon North Slope, except on Herschel Island where interaction between muskoxen and caribou will be studied.

Under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, WMAC(NS) is responsible for recommending harvest levels on the basis of conservation concerns and public safety.

Surveys in 1993 and 1995 placed the muskox population on the Yukon North Slope at about 150 animals. The five-animal hunting quota is just over three percent of the population, which WMAC(NS) considers a sustainable harvest level.

Only Inuvialuit can hunt muskoxen

The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) gives the Inuvialuit exclusive hunting rights for muskoxen in national and territorial parks. They also have

preferential hunting rights in the section of the Yukon North Slope that lies east of the Babbage River, outside the parks.

However, since the Yukon Wildlife Act prohibits hunting of muskoxen by both residents and non-residents, only the Inuvialuit have the right to hunt the animals in the Yukon.

Muskoxen and caribou have both lived on the



North Slope for thousands of years, but muskoxen began to disappear about 160 years ago, probably due to hunting pressure. The last muskox of that earlier population was thought to have been taken by hunters about 140 years ago.

Muskoxen came back 30 years ago

A few dozen muskoxen were returned to the Alaskan North Slope thirty years ago, and their numbers have increased since then. Now there are about 700 muskoxen across the North Slope, about 150 of them in the Yukon.

Although the size of the Porcupine Caribou Herd has also been increasing in recent years, the



Inuvialuit people of the North Slope have been concerned that the growing number of muskoxen might eventually threaten the Porcupine caribou. At community meetings in Aklavik, people expressed a desire to hold the muskox herd at its current level in order to avoid conflict with the caribou.

Muskoxen management plan on the way

The community meetings were part of WMAC(NS)'s development of a draft Yukon North Slope Muskoxen Management Plan.

The plan includes key elements that arose during the community discussions, including:

- maintenance of the muskox herd at its current level;
- close monitoring of the Yukon North Slope muskox population;
- direct involvement of Aklavik Inuvialuit in research activities related to muskoxen;
- consideration of the entire population of muskoxen in the Yukon and Alaska when

managing the Yukon North Slope herd; and

- cooperative arrangements between the Inupiat and Inuvialuit in the management of North Slope muskoxen.

The draft plan also recognizes the need for cooperation between wildlife officials in Alaska and officials with Parks Canada and the Yukon Government.

Alaskans have different goals

The different management goals for muskoxen in Alaska and the Yukon will make cooperation particularly important. In Alaska the management goal is to expand the herd, while the goal on the Yukon North Slope is to maintain a stable population at the current level.

Another muskox population survey is planned for March 1998, as part of on-going monitoring of the species. In addition to the monitoring program, the draft plan also proposes a research program that will lead to a better understanding of the behaviour and requirements of the Yukon North Slope muskoxen population.

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)

- **Inuvialuit Game Council:** Danny C. Gordon; Herbert Felix; Alternates: Billy Archie, and Carol Arey
- **Government of Canada:** Joan Eamer, Canadian Wildlife Service; Alternate: Alan Fehr, Parks Canada

- **Government of Yukon:** Brian Pelchat, Renewable Resources; Alternate: Dorothy Cooley, Renewable Resources
- **Chairperson:** Lindsay Staples
- **Secretariat:** Aileen Horler

For more information, please contact us at: WMAC (NS), P.O. Box 5928, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5L6
Tel: (867) 633-5476 Fax: (867) 633-6900

Email: wmacns@web.net **Website:** www.taiga.net/wmac