



MEETING MINUTES

WMAC (NS) Teleconference
February 26, 2009

Lindsay Staples Chair • **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Doug Larsen** Yukon Government (Member) • **Christian Bucher** Government of Canada (Member) • **Michelle Christensen** (Secretariat)

A. Call to Order

The Chair welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 2:12pm to discuss the Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan.

The Chair reviewed the process for providing comment on the Plan noting that the Working Group is not the only option through which to direct comments.

The Secretariat described the main changes made from the last draft as well as how Council comments were addressed in the new draft.

The Chair commented generally that this draft is tighter than the previous, noting that the Plan itself does not contain a recommendation for harvest, but rather outlines a management framework and process. He then invited members' comments on the Plan.

Members indicated that being privy to the rationale behind the acceptance of some comments and the rejection of others would have been useful.

The Chair suggested that the revisions and lack thereof in the new draft are a likely indicator that consensus could not be reached on many issues.

Doug provided some background on the Working Group's process in handling comments on the last draft, confirming that on issues like the Dempster Highway for example, consensus could not be reached.

A member expressed that one of his biggest concerns was that the draft does not go far enough fast enough and recommended that a 50% reduced, mandatory bull-only harvest come into effect immediately. The herd is projected to decline even if management actions in the yellow zone are implemented, which is what would come into place next year. He said that the Working Group is going to ask the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) to implement this Plan, which would in effect put us in the yellow zone.

The Chair raised concern over the effectiveness of management actions for the different zones.

A member said he was surprised that the PCMB would consider a Plan that doesn't address recovery - a goal of the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement.

The Chair explained that the distinction between the yellow and orange zone is a moot point because the tools necessary to implement the orange are not in effect for most of the range of the herd, meaning that the orange, practically speaking, is yellow.

Danny reminded the Council that the current size of the herd is still unknown. He also commented that it is fine if Herschel caribou are not specifically addressed, because they are not often hunted. He also expressed that even though people don't spend enough time on the land to know who the leaders are, that this traditional law should still appear in the Plan.

Doug explained to the Council that the Working Group struggled with another draft where in the yellow zone a mandatory bull-only harvest came into effect, which seemed to address the conservation concern raised by communities and echoed by WMAC (NS). It was rejected because it would have necessitated a Total Allowable Harvest which most First Nations do not have the ability to implement.

The Chair commented that the Plan seems to overwhelmingly rely on voluntary conduct and is light on law-based solutions.

Doug agreed that the Plan does not contain many enforcement mechanisms other than those affecting licensed hunters. He said he was skeptical about the success of voluntary compliance. He reported that he planned on recommending to Yukon that a mandatory bull-only harvest come into effect immediately and that a tag system be used to improve tracking of the aboriginal harvest.

The Chair said that a better tracking system would be useful, especially because the last herd count occurred eight years ago and harvest data, of all the indicators of herd size, is potentially one of the most valuable. He also noted that tag systems have been used on the North Slope with other species.

Christian concurred that a tag system and a mandatory bull-only harvest now would be a way to address the herd's decline. The introduction of tags with the Bluenose west herd worked well.

Danny commented that he wasn't sure if a tag system in Aklavik would work but said that he supported the idea. He also suggested that harvest reporting in the community is not accurate.

Ernest said that the Hunters and Trappers Committees could play an important role in managing the tags and that they have a good history of working with the community.

The Chair concluded that the implementation and review section of the draft HMP was weak and needed more than vague and general statements. He said that the Plan is only as good as the effectiveness of its implementation and that encouraging best practices are simply not enough.

A member redirected attention to the charts and stated that anything less than what chart four and five depict – herd recovery - is not adequate . He indicated that work on implementing a Total Allowable Harvest needs to start now.

A member explained that stochastic events are built into the models. He also reminded members that the herd is predicted to be at 75,000 animals, which is down from 180,000.

The Chair said it would be valuable if each chart clearly stated the resulting effect on the herd and if all parties stated their herd management goal.

Members commented on how politics have interfered with the Plan but that even if the Plan is compromised it is better to have something rather than nothing.

Doug recommended that the Council make comments to the Working Group, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, and the minister if necessary.

The Chair summarized that the implied management outcome associated with each chart should be explicitly stated, for example “herd recovery” or “herd decline”. The Chair asked the Council what management goal they would recommend.

All members agreed that they would like to see the herd size increase. A member noted that during the Working Group's consultations most communities indicated they would like to see herd recovery. The Chair remarked that in recommending herd recovery as the management goal, the Council does not support anything less than chart four or five.

A member suggested that perhaps through the annual review, the range of caribou numbers associated with each zone might be revised.

The Chair reiterated the importance in knowing where the different parties stand in terms of their preferred management goal, and the time period for which the Plan would be effective.

A member expressed the importance in getting the caribou numbers associated with each zone right the first time, because once the Plan is signed off, the numbers won't change.

The Council discussed timelines for getting comments in and the need to confer with Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT) and the Inuvialuit Game Council in order to present as unified a position on the Plan as possible to the Working Group.

B. The Chair suggested continuing the conversation at the March meeting and adjourned the meeting at 5:00pm.

Motion 02-09-01

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Moved: Ernest Pokiak

Second: Doug Larsen

Motion carried.