



Wildlife Watch

Wildlife Management Advisory Council North Slope



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North Slope Conference 2010

Arctic Wildlife Management: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges

The time is drawing near, once again, for the Government of Yukon and the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) to host the triennial North Slope Conference. The Conference is scheduled to take place February 16th through 18th, 2010 in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Many different issues and themes have been explored since the first conference was held in Dawson City back in 1989: environmental monitoring, the challenges of change, conservation planning, jurisdictional cooperation, environmental assessment, implementation of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, harvesting rights, climate change, and oil and gas development, just to name a few.

The conference theme planned for the 9th North Slope Conference is "Arctic Wildlife Management: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges". This theme is especially significant as 2009 marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

Many years have also passed since the signing of other land claim agreements in Arctic Canada and Alaska. Based on this experience and the lessons learned, aboriginal organizations, co-management bodies and governments from across the North will have an opportunity to discuss what major challenges they face in wildlife management and their views on how these challenges can be met.

Particular attention will be paid to future wildlife management challenges facing organizations in Arctic regions and what lessons, issues and remedies could be applied across them – particularly to the Yukon North Slope and the rest of the ISR.

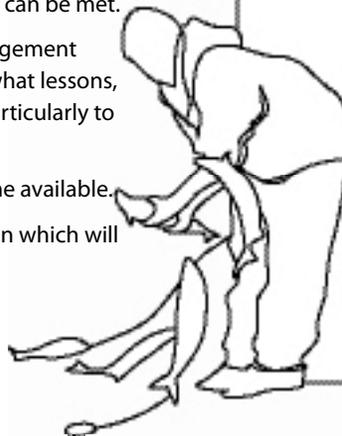
As the event draws closer more information will become available.

Check the Council's website for updates and registration which will open later this fall:

www.wmacns.ca



Muskox on the Yukon North Slope. Photo credit Ian McDonald.



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Council Comments on Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan

In June the Porcupine Caribou Management Board recommended a herd harvest management plan to all signatories of the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement, including the Inuvialuit Game Council, the Yukon Government and Environment Canada.

The Board hopes that all parties will sign the agreement to show their support and commitment to the Plan.

The Plan addresses harvest management issues related to conservation of the herd. The management goal as stated in the Plan is:

"We want to try to conserve the Porcupine Caribou Herd by adjusting the number and sex of caribou we harvest based on the changes in the herd size and population trend".

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) supports the Plan if a clear and concrete three year implementation plan is completed and adopted by the federal and territorial governments, and aboriginal governments and organizations

by April 2010.

An implementation plan would spell out what specific actions these bodies will pursue to implement the harvest management plan.

In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the Inuvialuit Game Council would indicate commitments to various actions under the Plan.

The Council also proposed that the implementation plan identify specific actions to address:

- reduction of cow harvest;
- effective harvest reporting; and
- the limitations of population estimates when making harvest management decisions.

For more information or to see a copy of the Plan go to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board's website at:

<http://www.taiga.net/pcmb/>

Herschel Island Porcupine Caribou. *Photo credit: Alice Kenney.*



Beaufort Sea Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study Planned

Together, the Wildlife Management Advisory Councils (Northwest Territories and North Slope) along with territorial and federal governments are hoping to launch a study which aims to gather local and traditional knowledge related to the health, abundance and distribution of polar bears, Inuvialuit use of polar bears, and the influences that climate change has had on polar bears and their habitat in the Beaufort.

National committees are interested in acquiring more local

Banks Island, 17 March, 1959. Tim Lennie and Wallace skinning a polar bear.
Photo credit: R. Knights/ NWT Archives/N-1993-002-0335.



and traditional knowledge on this species. Very little traditional knowledge has been documented on this species, despite a rich history of subsistence use in the ISR, as well as Inuvialuit-guided commercial sport hunts in the last several decades.

It is hoped that hunters, elders, and other individuals who are highly knowledgeable of polar bear would be identified by Hunters and Trappers Committees in the communities of Aklavik, Inuvik, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok, and Tuktoyaktuk to be interviewed.

Efforts would be made to involve local youth in the interviews as a capacity building and educational exercise.

Over the past winter researchers searched for existing documentation containing traditional and local knowledge of polar bears in the southern Beaufort.

The photograph on the left is an example of some of the visual information that was retrieved.

A number of documents were gathered from libraries and databases throughout the region and will help researchers prepare for interviews, which are scheduled to take place starting in the winter of 2009.

Porcupine Caribou through the Eyes of Aklavik Inuvialuit

Both scientific and traditional knowledge are important to caribou management, but unlike scientific knowledge, no comprehensive record of traditional knowledge for the Porcupine Caribou herd has been gathered to date.

In recognition of the value of traditional knowledge, WMAC (NS) launched this study. The main objectives of the research were to:

- learn about movement patterns, distribution, range, population trends, habitats and health of the Porcupine Caribou herd;
- understand more about the relationships between caribou and the peoples of Aklavik;
- establish a body of information that can provide a background to assess changes in the herd and peoples' use of caribou;
- inform WMAC (NS) educational materials and general management; and
- to inform development and implementation of the Porcupine Caribou Harvest Management Plan and Porcupine Caribou Management Board educational materials.

Thirteen Inuvialuit and one Gwich'in were interviewed in person in January and February of this year by social scientist Lisa Christensen, as well as Michelle Gruben and Savannah Greenland, community experts.

Porcupine Caribou are a corner stone of the northern ecosystem and are a vital source of physical, social, and cultural well-being for a number of communities in Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, including Aklavik.

Because of the strong ties between caribou and people, many interviewees expressed concern about the future of the herd, and especially the declining number of caribou.

Various aspects of caribou ecology were discussed and much of the information gathered about the relationships between people and caribou will serve useful for young hunters in Aklavik, as well as wildlife managers in the region.

The availability and security of Porcupine Caribou as a food source was mentioned by many people as an increasingly important management issue to address.

This work coincides with work proposed by the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to document traditional knowledge related to the Porcupine caribou herd across their range for use in educational materials.

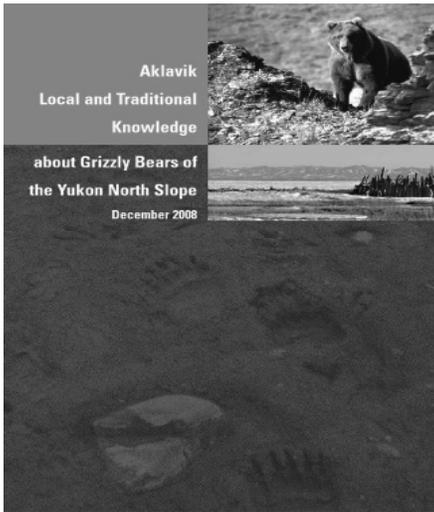
As a "thank you" to interviewees, each received a map of the Yukon North Slope to hang on a wall at home or to pack along when out on the land.

If you live in Aklavik, watch for reports in your mailboxes this fall. Copies will also be available through the WMAC office and on our website at:

www.wmacns.ca

Interviewers Lisa Christensen (left), Michelle Gruben (centre) and Savannah Greenland (right) pose together after a day of interviewing in Aklavik.





In March of this year the Council released *Aklavik Local and Traditional Knowledge about Grizzly Bears of the Yukon North Slope*.

If you haven't yet picked up your copy, contact the WMAC (NS) office in Whitehorse, visit the website and click on "Resources", or visit the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee.



North Yukon Land Use Plan Signed Off

In June the Yukon and Vuntut Gwitch'in governments approved the North Yukon Land Use Plan - the first regional plan approved in the Yukon. The plan provides a "road map" for future land uses in the North Yukon Planning Region and provides clarity on how the land will be used.

The plan provides management direction for Yukon public lands and Vuntut Gwitch'in First Nation settlement lands, outside of existing Protected Areas, Special Management Areas, and the community of Old Crow.

Highlights include:

- Recognition and approval of 23 land management and sub-management units.
- Creation of a zoning system based on intensity of use rather than type of use.
- Immediate implementation of the zoning recommendation concerning the areas affected by the lifting of the North Yukon land withdrawal.
- Agreement to use surface disturbance and linear density indicators to track and guide the adaptive management of new development activities.
- Establishment of a Whitefish wetland protected area, and a study area for the proposed Summit Lake – Bell River protected area and related land withdrawals.
- Agreement to develop a protocol enabling either government to initiate a review and amendment of the plan.
- Commitment to track existing access from the Dempster Highway to monitor possible wildlife and habitat impacts.

The Council suggested a number of revisions to the Plan which focused on the withdrawal order that applies to the northern Yukon (effectively removing the area from industrial development), conservation of the Porcupine Caribou herd, and management and monitoring issues associated with the Dempster Highway corridor as they relate to the Porcupine caribou. Most of these were incorporated in the Plan.



Photo credit: Ramona Maraj.

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