

MEETING MINUTES

WMAC (NS) Quarterly Meeting
Whitehorse, YT • Edgewater Inn, Whitehorse, Yukon
September 7-8, 2010

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Lindsay Staples (Chair) • **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Christian Bucher** Government of Canada (Member) • **Doug Larsen** Yukon Government (Member) **Rob Florkiewicz** Yukon Government (Observer) • **Dorothy Cooley** Yukon Government (Alternate) • **Jennifer Smith** (Secretariat) • **Christine Cleghorn** (Secretariat) • **Stephanie Muckenheim** Yukon Government (Guest)

A. Call to Order

The Chair welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:06 am.

The Chair welcomed Christine Cleghorn, new half-time Secretariat, and Rob Florkiewicz, pending Yukon member, to the Council.

B. Review and Approval of Agenda

The Chair reviewed the agenda and meeting schedule for the week. It was decided that Ernest and Danny would remain to attend the IGC meeting.

Motion 09-10-01

To approve the agenda for the September 7-8, 2010 meeting.

Moved: Christian Bucher

Second: Doug Larsen

Motion carried.

C. Review and Approval of June Minutes

The Council reviewed the June 17-21, 2010 minutes and identified the following changes/revisions:

- Page 12: change schoold to schools, page 14: change infurenced to influenced, page 16: change bordery to border, remove...a sharing
- Page 16: change the last paragraph to “Christian explained that the Yukon wouldn’t be able to issue tags *that would be enforceable* by Parks Canada”.

- Page 17: remove the first sentence beginning 3“Christian spoke...”
- Page 17: Change 5th paragraph to “The downsizing was largely due to concerns raised by some personal users and rafters. At the time the need for school groups and arts in the park was not articulated as a use.”
- Page 18: remove the 6th paragraph beginning “Christian provided..”
- Page 20: change the third paragraph to: “...the SOPR has to be produced and approved by the CEO and becomes similar to a management plan.”

Motion 09-10-02

To approve the minutes for the June 17-21, 2010 WMAC (NS) meeting as revised.

Moved: Ernest Pokiak

Second: Doug Larsen

Motion carried.

The Council reviewed the August 11, 2010 teleconference meeting record.

Motion 09-10-03

To approve the meeting record for the August 11, 2010 WMAC (NS) teleconference.

Moved: Danny C. Gordon

Second: Christian Bucher

Motion carried.

D. Review of Action Items

The Council reviewed the status of action items; updates to action items are shown here:

Action 03-08-04: The Secretariat will track the parliamentary committee’s review of SARA. **Add to bring forward file (circulate if anything is received, monitor process of committee).**

Action 06-09-12: The WMAC (NS) Secretariat will prepare a briefing note later in the fall once Porcupine Caribou management issues have been resolved, re-capping the last year and a half of activity. Notes will also be started for grizzly bear, polar bear, and muskox. **Add to bring forward file**

Action 09-09-09: The Secretariat will inquire with the Canadian Wildlife Service and/or Wendy Nixon to determine how alternate Canada members for WMAC (NS) have been appointed in previous years. **In progress.** The Chair will raise the issue of government member and alternate appointments at the Joint Secretariat board meeting.

Doug inquired about whether the IFA speaks to alternate appointments and the Chair informed that the IFA is silent on it.

Action 09-09-10: The WMAC (NS) will write a letter to Environment Canada regarding securement of IFA funds for wildlife research. **In progress.** The Council would like to clarify the funding arrangements with EC. Currently the council is entering into

contribution agreements with EC for the expenditure of funds related to Arctic Borderlands operations.

The Chair will raise the issue of implementation funding this week at a meeting with DIAND in order to clarify funding arrangements. Christian suggested producing a reference document to clarify the arrangements and the Chair mentioned that a consultation paper is being developed by the Federal government.

Action 12-09-04: The Secretariat will compile/reproduce maps from the 1999 Yukon North Slope Atlas, as well as Jim Hawkings' satellite image map, and bring them forward to the next Council meeting for review. **In progress.** The Secretariat will continue scoping work.

Action 12-09-13: The Council will create a multi-year plan for IFA-funded research during its 2010 summer meeting. **Complete.** The Council will produce a calendar/ plan that would recommend research and how often it needs to be repeated. Dorothy will make an informal calendar for December.

Action Item 09-10-01: Dorothy will compile an informal research priority calendar for the December 2010 meeting.

Action Item: 09-10-02: Discuss research priorities with the AHTC in December to get an idea of their priorities for research.

10:10 AM Stephanie Muckenhiem arrived.

Action 02-10-03: Christian Bucher will send to the WMAC (NS) Secretariat a copy of Parks Canada's 2006 resolution regarding non-beneficiary guides' right to carry firearms. **Retire.** This was a wmac (nwt) resolution, **Jen Smith will follow up with Jen Lam.**

Action 02-10-05: WMAC (NS) will incorporate changes identified at its February meeting to the Muskox Plan and convene a teleconference at the end of April to review the revised draft, after which time meetings be held with the WMAC NWT and IGC Chairs as well as the Aklavik HTC to review the draft. Once the draft is finalized it will be sent out for broader comment. **In progress.** Secretariat reviewed. **Discuss at next Council meeting.**

Action 02-10-11: The WMAC (NS) Secretariat will contact Nick Lunn at Environment Canada to receive the latest update from Arctic Net. **Add to bring forward file.** EC contacted.

Action 02-10-12: In 2010/11 WMAC (NS) will explore options with the Joint Secretariat regarding hiring Nigel Bankes to prepare a briefing note on jurisdictional issues in the Beaufort. **In progress.** The Chair has contacted Nigel, waiting for a response. The aim is to have this done by December.

Action 02-10-15: The WMAC (NS) will provide comments on the draft Arctic Plains and Mountains Bird Conservation Regional Plan when released in September 2010, as well as on the list of priority species for the region, and will comment on implementation plan development. The Council will also discuss with the WMAC (NWT) in September 2010 the plan for an ISR-wide implementation plan. **Add to bring forward file.** The draft will be released in November, technical review in January. Our Council will be kept up to date on the process.

Action 02-12-18: WMAC (NS) will request a copy of the JS produced video on polar bear for CITES. **Complete** Requested but not received. **Follow up with Steve.**

Action 06-10-03: The Secretariat will compose a letter and send a plaque to the Hamlet of Aklavik to commemorate their 100 year anniversary. The secretariat work with the Hamlet to determine the schedule of events will be. **In progress.** Evelyn Storr has suggested that we present this plaque in Aklavik in December. **Secretariat to work with Danny C.**

Action 06-10-06 – Write a letter to Yukon Government supporting the regulation changes for tag issuance on Herschel island for grizzly bear and for polar bear so that the harvesting zone mirrors that of the Grizzly bear zone and remains inside the ISR. **in progress** letter has been drafted. **Lindsay and Doug will review it.**

Action 06-10-07– Write a second letter to Yukon Government to support the progress on tag issuance for grizzly and polar bear in Ivvavik and offshore. **Outstanding. To discuss at joint WMAC meeting.**

Action 06-10-09: Lindsay to confer with Larry and Frank regarding tag administration and to discuss that issues be addressed at the joint meeting of WMACs. **Outstanding.** Will be discussed at September meeting.

10:49 Linh Nguyen and Ifan Thomas arrived.

E. Parks Canada –Ivvavik National Park Ecological Integrity Monitoring Program

Ifan Thomas, Superintendent, Western Arctic Field Unit and Linh Nguyen, Ecosystem Scientist, Parks Canada, presented the ecological integrity (EI) monitoring program for Ivvavik National Park.

Ifan discussed the EI budget for the Western Arctic. Altogether \$350,000 is budgeted for all three Western Arctic National Parks excluding money for Porcupine and Peary Caribou. Ifan explained that though the budget is large, due to high transportation costs, the program is modest compared to other national parks.

Linh explained that EI is a way of measuring ecosystem health from the perspective of the ecosystem in order to get baseline information. In Ivavik there are four ecosystems- freshwater, forest, tundra, and coastal. Linh described the established and planned monitoring program for each of the ecosystems. He mentioned, where possible, Parks shares program costs and uses volunteers. Linh discussed the water sampling program, which costs over \$20,000. Data records for the program run from 2000-2009; analysis will take place in 2010 for 10 years of data and will provide a benchmark for the program.

A member asked what criteria would be applied for the frequency of collecting data once benchmarks are established.

Linh explained that the sampling frequency is data dependant. He provided the example of the lemming study; 10 years of data were collected and during analysis it was realized that alternate years could be skipped while still capturing the trend. Fewer sampling events save money.

Linh explained that Parks has tried to utilize rafters for water sample collection, but samples need to be analyzed within 24 hours. Linh explained that collaboration does take place with the river flow gauge program for flights.

The river flow gauge was discussed, it was established in 1972. It is expensive to maintain (\$50,000/year). It records summer peak flows from year to year. There has been no change in trend over the 35 years. June flow is important for the Dolly Varden and the August flow is important for the fish to come back to their fish holes. In recent years, if melt is shifting, it has not been recorded, since the timing of the gauge is seasonal.

The station is automated to collect information daily, but Water Survey of Canada staff must turn it on in June, calibrate it in July, and turn it off near September.

Lihn explained that the focus area of the monitoring program is Sheep Creek, because of its accessibility, as well as the Firth river corridor. Results are extrapolated over the park.

The protocol for breeding bird monitoring was discussed. Point count surveys were used in the past, but they were covering too many ecosystems and as a result, over time more species were being added. Now plots are being established by ecosystem. 16 plots have been established in forested area in 2009 and 13 in the tundra in 2010.

Currently there is a university partnership and NSERC-driven grants for the breeding birds surveys.

The insect work in the park has looked at arthropods to inform about the health of the ecosystem as birds rely on them. Forest collections are complete. Now the two month project will be adapted into a two week project to carry into the future. Opportunities have been available for beneficiaries to participate in the project.

For vegetation, 16 plots have been established in the forest to look at structure and composition. The plan is to return every five years to identify changes in structure and species composition.

For Porcupine caribou work, satellite collars are supported. Ivavik protects a portion of the calving grounds. Parks Canada also supported Yukon government's 2010 calving census effort and harvest management planning.

Plant productivity is examined through remote sensing. Data goes back to 1985. Currently trying to determine how productive the parks are from year to year – the greener they are, the more productive they are. The questions that can be answered are: How much is productivity changing year to year? What is the start of the growing season?

For permafrost, Linh described the installation of thaw tubes this year.

Soil profiling will be done every five years in conjunction with the vegetation surveys to determine how deep the organic layer is, and what the ph level is.

For the coastal environment, no monitoring is in place at the present time due to logistics. Vegetation change, sea dynamics, coastal fish surveys, and red-throated loon productivity are all under consideration.

Danny C. Gordon commented that coastal erosion was particularly spectacular this year. Wind has carried erosion out into the water and he has seen grey water instead of blue. He explained that this really affects Dolly Varden.

Linh commented that the system Parks Canada has developed for monitoring is interlinked, so if something is happening to one indicator, it should be showing up in the others too.

Ifan informed the Council that the Stokes Point project is complete, all of the materials have been removed, tested, and no further work is required. This has been the largest site cleanup undertaken and the work was done off of the barge.

He spoke to the Council about the Sheep Creek site. He spoke about the footprint at Sheep Creek and the intention to maintain the site size as it is. The Chair spoke to the downsizing at Sheep Creek seven years ago which removed some structures. Ifan said that they would like to use one structure for displaying artifacts, and maybe one for sewage.

He explained that the airstrip is it adequate from Aklak's standpoint. For landing other aircrafts it may require upgrading. Ernest emphasized the need for a safe airstrip and that the addition of even 70 meters to a short strip could improve it.

Ifan suggested that Parks Canada may hire an expert to look at the airstrip and it's possibilities. Some material may be able to be removed from the contaminated site to fill in some of the holes in the strip. The advantage of Sheep Creek is that there is machinery there that is in working condition. Once started, airstrip maintenance is probably an ongoing effort.

He explained that changes to the Sheep Creek site would likely involve amendments to the management plan and would involve full consultation with all partners. Examples of potential proposed amendments are sewage and gray water treatment as well as future use of site (youth camps, research, and monitoring).

Ifan leaves the meeting.

F. Ecological Monitoring

The Council discussed the upcoming Co-op monitoring meeting (Sept 9th) and the Chair posed several questions to the Council: Given our mandate and our responsibilities, what are our information needs from the Co-op? What is the frequency that this information should be collected? What are others doing as far as monitoring goes (in order to minimize duplication of effort)?

He noted that part of the motivation for the Co-op to renew itself right now is to address concerns by various parties about whether or not the Co-op data is useful and accessible.

He explained that the list of scientific indicators is a list of records that are routinely being collected by various agencies. The survey questionnaire is currently being reworked and still needs to be widely reviewed. The timing for the review is short as the Co-op is planning to use the survey for interviews this year (November).

The Council reviewed the WMAC (NS) mandate as it relates to monitoring. The Chair summarized the two areas to be mindful of: the conservation of wildlife in general on the North Slope, and secondly to protect and maintain Inuvialuit traditional use on the North Slope. WMAC (NS) recommendations about management bridge these two considerations. He also highlighted areas where the Council spends time in discussion: on the management of the two parks on the North Slope, harvested wildlife species; and conditions for development that may affect the conservation purposes of the area. The Council has always had an interest in what is happening on the coast and the conservation of coastal waters, coastal lagoons, seabird habitats. The Council has been vigilant with respect to industrial development on the north coast. The WMAC (NS) is also interested in the changes on Herschel Island with respect to different vegetation, and weather patterns – these are secondary factors that influence the abundance and dispersion of wildlife, as well as people's ability to be on the land.

Doug spoke about incorporating traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge. We need to be aware of what type of information is being collected through interviews- is it personal observations? In our own TK studies we have made the point that we are interested in historical trends. This is a very useful contribution to management. Doug emphasized that issues with the data should be dealt with before the collection of more occurs. He suggested that maybe we should be monitoring Inuvialuit use – what should we be monitoring that influences Inuvialuit use of harvested species.

Christian raised the challenge of communication and collaboration between agencies because the task of ecological monitoring is so large. He discussed creating questions which are complementary to the work that scientists are doing and that they are not necessarily collecting information on. Examples are icing events, predation, etc. He raised the point that scientific data is usually peer reviewed and the kind of information being collected by the Co-op should be peer reviewed also.

Danny mentioned that when you look at satellite info about ice, it will tell you that there is ice there but it won't tell you what condition it is in, or whether it is in chunks or if it is in small pieces. He also informed members that other agencies and industry are not usually interested in using the information that the Co-op has. Some of the information is really good. He also raised that things have changed – climate change, bank erosion, etc. and these changes need to be taken into consideration when looking at the records.

Dorothy, as a member on the Board of Directors of the Co-op, informed members of the direction that the Co-op is taking. The strength of the Co-op is the community connection. To take advantage of it we need to keep in mind that we are not trying for a random sample – we are keying in on local experts. The kind of information we should be collecting is where we can complement the science. A good example is insect activity – local people have good information about it and science doesn't. She raised the different kinds of monitoring projects and the list of indicators that is already happening – let the scientists do that work and have the Co-op complement them. Some questions can be answered by one-time projects, so the Borderlands questions should focus on things that you want to know every year from people. Try to get some information on the implications of the changes on people. There has been a fair amount of thought about analysis in the new questionnaire about how the information will be used. Community information and partner priorities are not yet in the document.

The Board has recommended for the survey to be reviewed by the monitors. One of the big questions is whether or not the Borderlands would continue to collect spatial information. This will definitely affect the questions that get asked. There has also been a shift away from questions about contaminants.

Ernest raised the importance of talking to the key people who spend a great deal of time on the land. He thought we should be monitoring seals, polar bear, loons and eider ducks for the marine environment. He said that we need to monitor them as well as the species we are currently monitoring. He emphasized that using professional interviewers are important. He indicated that in order to sort out a host of issues the Co-op may need to take a break for a while.

Doug observed that a lot of the people with the long term traditional knowledge are passing away. He suggested that we recognize this and think about where we see the instrument in five –ten years when the demographics of who is on the land will have changed.

The Chair asked, what can we learn from the year-over-year observations that is really special? We need enough care in our methodologies that we can produce more than a narrative. Does the data collected allow for the construction of some form of ecological factual base.

Dorothy mentioned that it is a useful exercise to check in every ten years and see if the data is useful, where we are at with the data, as Parks Canada does.

Christian mentioned that a strength of Borderlands should be to tie together various pieces of information and help determine cause and effect.

Dorothy stated that asking people if they met their harvested needs is a good starting point – it is a way of generating hypothesis about changes to the environment.

The Chair mentioned that there are two components of the workshop: substantively, what do you want to know? And then secondly, process-wise, who is this information being collected by and from, and how is it being collected?

3:09pm: Mike Gill arrived.

The Chair mentioned that coastal processes are an area of interest, and one that currently appears to be a vacant area for Parks Canada's monitoring program.

He mentioned that the Joint Secretariat is intending to host a sea ice and polar bear workshop in February.

Dorothy raised that the only coastal question that is asked right now is on polar bears, yet there are three coastal communities in the Co-op.

The Chair talked about barriers to people getting out on the land. Protecting traditional use is part of our mandate.

Doug mentioned that we should preface all of our questions and comments with certain checks and balances that we expect from the Co-op. We have not exhausted all of the analysis possibilities for the existing data. There is still some value in duplicating scientific work, and also filling in gaps with traditional knowledge where there is no scientific data.

Dorothy said that to the extent possible, we need to keep in mind how we will use and analyze the data once it is collected.

The Council discussed where the berry questions came from. Dorothy voiced that they are likely an index of primary productivity and extreme events in the spring that affect berry production. There are also implications on people for berries: 1) people pick berries to eat, and 2) problems especially in Mackenzie Delta with bears and bear food.

G. Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program

Mike Gill, Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, presented to the Council on the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP). It is an international network made up of scientists, conservationists, governments and more, for community based monitoring. These groups are linked to integrate efforts for monitoring the Arctic. He provided an overview of the CBMP program, including how Canada is coordinating with other countries on monitoring and data sharing.

The goal is to allow for early detection, communication and response to trends and pressures with respect to biodiversity in the circumpolar arctic.

He discussed the CAFF program (Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna). This program tracks change and generates arctic species trend indexes.

Mike introduced the "data portal" which is the interface where the data is accessed. Mike explained that they are using coalitions of people who are interested in it. The hard part seems to be getting people to contribute their data. He explained that they started with seabirds. They have a strategic plan of what datasets they think are the most important. Once nations sign onto monitoring plans they commit their data to the portal. There is no harvest data on the website.

Mike explained that an Arctic biodiversity assessment is done to consider the trends of biodiversity in the Arctic. The assessment is meant to provide policy makers and

conservation managers with a synthesis of the most current scientific research and traditional knowledge on arctic biodiversity.

H. Correspondence

The Council reviewed correspondence and focused on the following:

1. *COSWEIC Update Status Report on Grizzly/Brown Bear*. The Chair mentioned that the council is well positioned to review the status report.
2. *EISC and Review Board are revising their guidelines*. The Council will provide comment on the guidelines.
3. *The COSEWIC paper on DU for caribou*. WMAC(NS) will comment on the Designatable Units for Caribou in Canada. The report refers to the criteria for declaring a population to be a population (ie genetics, geography, etc). The size of the unit and how it is designated has implications for how harvest is managed. The COSEWIC document will be placed on the sharefile. October 8th is the deadline for comments.

Action Item 09-10-03: Chair to confer with members and submit comments on the COSEWIC paper on DU for caribou in early October.

4. *IWMAC-World Conservation Trust- sustainable use of wildlife group*, this is an important group to keep track of.
5. *Polar Bear Conservation Strategy- WMAC (NS) comments on the strategy*. The Chair identified an outstanding wording discussion with WMAC (NWT) about the description of the management regime for Polar Bear in the Southern Beaufort.
6. *Trapping Concession boundary issue update*. Stephanie explained it to the Council. There was a discussion of faulty mapping, historic trapping concession boundaries, and confusion at the community level in Aklavik. The Chair stated that there is no VGFN settlement land in the ISR.

Action Item 09-10-04: The Council will raise the trapping concession boundary at AHTC meeting in December.

Tuesday, September 8, 2010

Lindsay Staples (Chair) • **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Christian Bucher** Government of Canada (Member) • **Doug Larsen** Yukon Government (Member) **Rob Florkiewicz** Yukon Government • **Dorothy Cooley** Yukon Government (Alternate) • **Jennifer Smith** (Secretariat) • **Christine Cleghorn** (Secretariat) • **Stephanie Muckenhiem** Yukon Government (Guest)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:06am.

I. Financial Report

The Secretariat reviewed the financial report and alerted members to the changes under staff, Christine is working half time with the Council until March 31st, as well as under projects, Wayne Wysocki's work will probably be done the work by December; so this year's funds along with carryover from last year will be spent.

Reallocation of research funds

Doug explained that he Polar bear TK project still requires funding for this year- \$4000. YG would like to retain some flexibility in the research funds in the event money is needed for the porcupine caribou work. The recommendation is to reallocate the remaining \$12,000 later in the year.

9:24am Rob Florkiewicz and Richard Gordon arrived.

Doug explained that doing another rut count is a priority for YG and since the survey has to be done in the next month.

The Council recommended that the "notional" funds allocation be fully committed to the Porcupine caribou rut count for \$14,000.

Action item 09-10-05: Secretariat to write a letter to Stephanie, YG, to commit \$14,000 to the caribou rut count and to recommend \$4000 to be allocated to the polar bear traditional knowledge study. The remaining \$12,000 will be reallocated in December.

J. Muskoxen Co-management Plan

The Chair provided an overview of the revisions to the draft document since the spring meeting. The Chair explained the evolving circumstance and context for the plan. Originally the plan was just for the north slope muskox. The plan was developed and completed in draft; a quota recommendation was set and sent to the Minister. The Minister asked the council to look at the entire herd, over the Canadian range. WMAC (NWT) and many parties become involved. At the end of the day, the scope was reduced, given jurisdictional differences regarding the importance of the plan and varying levels of commitment to it. The other major plan difference is the marked differences to the management regime applied in NWT vs. YT. These differences include: concern about the transfer of parasites, genetic mixing, and the history of muskox as "specially protected wildlife" in the Yukon. In the NWT there was no set quota in the vicinity of the Mackenzie Valley and the Mackenzie Delta. During the time of collaboration there were also meetings with the Alaskans (Inupiat). In the meantime, there was been huge decline in the muskox population in ANWAR.

In the Yukon, the population is distributed widely, with populations in Herschel, the Richardson's, and sightings on the Bonnet Plume. It became too large a challenge to create a management plan that considered all of the management scenarios. So the plan has been recast from the Canadian plan, to a plan for the North Slope which considers the conditions that apply to muskox management in the adjacent areas by those jurisdictions.

Much of the previous commentary on the Canadian range remains in the plan. The current plan deals with the management of muskoxen on the North Slope while considering how jurisdictions to the south, east, and west, manage these animals. The plan is trying to achieve an integrated approach across the range and encourage adjacent jurisdictions to use the plan as a basis for managing muskoxen on the remaining Canadian range of this population.

The Council discussed the plan, and several key issues on the matter emerged: to clarify the application of total allowable harvest in the plan, and clarification of the overall goal of the plan as it applies to harvesting.

Stephanie Muckenheim arrived 10:12am

James Malone (FJMC) arrived at 10:46am

James Malone provided the Council with an update of the FJMC's work over the last 12 months.

James updated the Council about new staffing. Vic Gillman was appointed as the Chair in January 2010. The next FJMC meeting is October 4-8, 2010 in Inuvik. He updated the Council on the project formally known as the "Beluga Monitoring Program". This name has changed to the "Community Fish and Marine Mammal Monitoring program" to include more species and harvest monitoring. He informed the Council that a working group has been struck who will provide comment to the EIRB on the proposed Tuk-Inuvik highway project.

James Malone leaves meeting

K. Ongoing Business-Polar Bear

Evan Richardson, John Ryder, Tom Jung, Ramona Maraj, and Ifan Thomas arrived at meeting

Andy Derocher, University of Alberta, began the discussions on polar bear research.

Andy described his research over the past number of years. He discussed key findings about bear movements, and their habitat and distribution, forward projection in sea ice changes, and oil and gas impacts.

Andy discussed the limits of helicopter reach for doing surveys and the constraints.

Andy informed members that in research they get out as far as possible with a helicopter from land base. He said that there may be a lot more bears offshore, but we can't get there. We can get to about 120kms out from shore. He said that he has not seen a strong drop off in the bears until you get out to the continental shelf. Bears seem to turn around

when they hit the continental shelf. We know that the Beaufort also has sea-ice denning bears. We are sampling as far off as anyone else has ever been able to get.

Doug mentioned that the movements of the animals suggest mixing between populations. He asked, In the future do you think we will be able to use the 13 subpopulations across Canada?

Andy suggested that the population boundaries could change. There is a lot of episodic event in the ice. The ice is doing strange things and the bears respond annually to it. Population boundaries are very context specific –i.e. for a spill, harvest, etc. It is a dynamic time out there right now for bears and biologists. Maybe we need to start to think on a bigger scale for polar bears than small subunits.

Lindsay asked if there is a relationship between sea ice and polar bear habitat? Andy said that there is no straight cause/effect relationship here. If you see a change in ecosystem in southern Beaufort sea, we aren't certain if the bears are responding to changes there or changes in other environments (Chukchi Sea).

Evan Richardson, CWS, provided an overview of Environment Canada's work in response to the Oil and Gas Development in the southern Beaufort Sea, including the future development of a range management plan for the polar bears in the southern Beaufort Sea. They will be striking a steering committee for the management plan development, and WMAC (NS) will be invited to be there. He described the modeling work they have undertaken for maternal denning information. Slope, aspect, and bank height were found to be primary determinants for polar bears in selecting den sites.

Linh Nguyen, Vic Gilman arrived. 1:57pm

L. Ongoing Business-Grizzly Bear project update

Ramona Maraj, Yukon Government, provided an update on the North Slope Grizzly bear project.

She presented on her 2010 field season and preliminary results for the grizzly bear project. She reviewed the study objectives, partnerships, and methods including collaring, traditional knowledge, hair trapping and telemetry and flying to monitor.

She described the core study area, chosen because of lack of info about the coastal area, as well as high harvest in that area.

2010 work summary- this should be the last year of the study. The hunter tracking program was run again, seven hunters took out GPS to get locations, which are uploaded frequently to get an idea of hunting locations.

She explained that all collars were retrieved in Aug, and GPS collars were applied to do collar correction. Fuel drums were cleaned up except for the ones being ones used as burn barrels on Shingle.

To complete identification analysis, she wants to focus on the DNA grids. She explained that geographic borders were used as closures including ocean, canyons etc. She walked through the hair trapping methods. Liquid scent was used so that bears couldn't get

rewarded from it. The hair sampling was run for two years. Six sampling sessions were done in total using a grid over two years. From this information one can tell individuals but not ages of bears. Cameras were used to determine age, but were not that effective. 5000 hair samples have been collected and so a sub sampling protocol is being used to analyze the hair.

The analysis also showed individuals and a parentage analysis. In the DNA grid 177 individuals were identified. The grid was 5080 square km. Movement data has been included in the analyses and started to review the parentage.

From our analysis there will be between 400-500 bears. The population estimate is definitely higher than what was previously thought. John Nagey's earlier estimate was 300 bears. We can't say if this is a result from a population increase, or more rigorous methods. The first field study was done in the 70's where ear tags were used.

From traditional knowledge work, hunters are saying that there hasn't been very much change in the number of bears, and there hasn't been a change in the food that much.

Ramona reminded the group that the estimates include cubs though and those aren't a harvested species.

Demographic work still needs to be done to look at how fast that population is growing; that work will begin this month. She discussed also building a model to estimate the population on the entire Yukon North Slope.

Interesting results that came out of the work showed the importance of large males, DNA was examined and there was a large male bear found that is responsible for 1/5th of the gene pool of breeding pairs.

Also a sub population structure was found. There are areas of genetic isolation also.

The interim recommendation is that the population seems really healthy.

Still to examine unreported kills, tag allocation, allocation in park, waste management plan at shingle point, attraction to garbage, communication strategy with results.

She explained the communication efforts of the study, newsletters, HTC, IGC, WMAC meetings, ran a workshop with kids at single point.

She walked through other aspects of the program which are subject to funding and were not completed. Den work (survival data), digitizing vegetation data to build habitat maps.

The Chair asked if there were any early thoughts on the monitoring program. Ramona explained that she thinks there will be indicators relating to productivity and body conditioning.

She will present to the AHTC in the spring, but the process for increasing the quota may be a longer process. She explained the process.

The Chair briefed the Council that there has been some interested expressed by EMR to open discussions on the status of the Withdrawal Order. The Council is revising the Wildlife Conservation and Management plan; as we work through the section addressing the Withdrawal Order, it may inform or be informed by the Withdrawal Order discussions depending on when they occur.

M. Upcoming Meetings

Ernest will be attending Ice tech conference in Anchorage. Danny may attend the 13th North American caribou conference as well as CARMA 7.

The next WMCA (NS) meeting will be the week of December 6th.

N. Adjournment

Motion 09-10-04

To adjourn the meeting

Moved: Danny C. Gordon

Second: Christian Bucher

Motion carried.