



# Wildlife Watch

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (NORTH SLOPE)  
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 2

September 1990

## Researching Wildlife on the North Slope



Studying wildlife on the North Slope has been an important activity of the Yukon Government's Department of Renewable Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service for the past few years. Much of this research is the result of the signing of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. The Canadian Wildlife Service is responsible for migratory birds - ducks, geese, and swans - on the North Slope. The Yukon Government is responsible for all other wildlife, including moose, grizzly bears, wolverines, and ptarmigan. The Canadian Wildlife Service provides research support to the Yukon Government for managing Porcupine caribou.

Government wildlife managers now understand a great deal about wildlife on the North Slope. Hugh Monaghan is Director of Fish and Wildlife for the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources. He says that, "As a result of research completed over the last few years, we are now comfortable that at current harvest levels, we understand wildlife on the Slope. We have learned a lot about the animals that the people of Aklavik use there."

To tell the community about the research, factsheets on different species and issues are being prepared by the WMAC/NS. The first one, on caribou and muskox on the North Slope, will be sent to you very soon. Two other factsheets - one on grizzly bears and one on habitat protection - will be sent to you later this year.

### Want to Start a Business? Please Let Us Know About It

Are you interested in starting a wildlife viewing or hunting business?

Many people in the community have said that they would like to get involved in commercial sports, hunting or wildlife viewing businesses. Hunters from the South may be interested in sport hunts for grizzly bears or Dall Sheep. Birdwatching and visiting a traditional Inuvialuit summer camp on the coast also will appeal to many Southern tourists.

To provide support to new businesses, government needs to know what the interests of the community are, says

**Hugh Monaghan**, Director of Fish and Wildlife for the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources. "If people want to start new businesses based on wildlife, we will need to monitor populations carefully. We need



direction from the people of Aklavik.”

“We have identified some opportunities for wildlife-related guiding on the North Slope, and we hope the people will explore these new business opportunities,” said Mr. Monaghan.

More and more tourists are coming North each year, and many are travelling to Herschel Island and to the coast. If Inuvialuit wish to start businesses based on wildlife, they should let us know now so we can plan the necessary research.

Bringing tourists to the Yukon coast can provide more jobs for the people of Aklavik. However, if we do not plan carefully, tourists may disturb coastal

habitat, and traditional native use.

To help make sure that the North Slope is protected, the WMAC/NS is preparing the Yukon North Slope Conservation and Management Plan. The plan will use information gathered by the Aklavik Land Use Planning Working Group, wildlife researchers, and community representatives.

The plan will have five broad objectives:

- (1) to make sure that the environment of the North Slope - wildlife, habitat, water, and air - is kept clean and healthy for the Inuvialuit, Yukoners, and for all Canadians;
- (2) to conserve the wildlife and habitat, and thus



hunters and bother the wildlife. The WMAC/NS wants to work with people in the community to be sure that wildlife monitoring programs are in place before guiding starts.

If you would like to start a guiding business, tell your Inuvialuit WMAC/NS members, **Frank Elanik** and **Sadie Whitbread**. They will bring your concerns and interests to our attention. Together we can work to make sure that wildlife is unharmed by tourist activities.

### **Planning for the Future of the North Slope**

Inuvialuit travel each year to the Yukon coast to harvest whale, caribou. And fish. Providing much-needed food, these trips are also an important link to the land. The *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* recognizes the importance of the North Slope to the people of Aklavik. The North Slope is managed as a special area under the Agreement. The most important use of the North Slope is conservation of wildlife,

protect the traditional harvesting activities of the Inuvialuit;

- (3) to gather the information and knowledge needed to protect the environment of the Yukon North Slope;
- (4) to make sure that all North Slope users, and particularly Aklavik Inuvialuit, are asked about and involved in decision-making about development proposals for the North Slope;
- (5) to gather and use traditional Inuvialuit knowledge in all management activities and decisions affecting the Yukon North Slope.

Over the fall, the Council will expand on these objectives and put together a plan for protecting the North Slope. **Sadie Whitbread** and **Frank Elanik** will discuss the plan with the Hunters' and Trappers' Committee.

Try to attend these meetings. Tell Frank and Sadie what concerns you have about the North Slope.

## Review Board Advises Against Approval of Gulf Drilling Program

In early June, 1990, public hearings were held by the Environmental Impact Review Board to assess the three-year drilling program proposed for the Beaufort Sea by Gulf Resources Canada.

A few weeks later, the Review Board said that it had no option but to recommend strongly against approval of the Gulf Drilling Program. The Board gave two reasons for this:

- (1) that neither Gulf Resources Canada nor the Government of Canada were prepared to respond to an oil spill should a blowout occur; and
- (2) given the limited amount of information presented at the hearings, the Board could not deal with Gulf's liability for clean-up and environmental damage should a spill occur.

In their report on the hearings, the Board said that neither government nor Gulf has really planned for a spill because they believe that a blowout is unlikely. In the offshore oil drilling industry, however, blowouts do occur. Blowouts have happened off the coast of California and in the Gulf of Mexico - they also could happen in the Beaufort. The Board could not approve Gulf's application without being sure that Gulf and the government could respond should a spill occur.

In the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, developers are responsible for environmental damage. Before a project can go ahead, liability must be determined. Gulf Canada said that it couldn't estimate how much wildlife would be hurt by oil if a spill occurred. Also, they couldn't say how much it would cost to clean up the spill. Without this data, the Board could not recommend approval of the drilling



program.

In its report, the Board also identified several other problems with Gulf's application. Important to the people of Aklavik is that Gulf did not look at how an oil blowout might affect the Arctic coast of Alaska. If a blowout occurred late in the season, oil would be trapped in the ice. Because the ice moves west in the winter, oil could wash up on Alaskan shores in the spring when the ice melts. The Board told Gulf that they should look at the possible impacts from a spill all across the region. Many people are working hard to make sure that the United States does not allow oil and gas development on the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. At the same time, we must make sure that activities in Canada do not hurt the environment.

At the end of its report, the Review Board recommended that industry and government spend more time looking at how they would deal with an oil blowout. They need to identify what would happen to the wildlife and environment all across the Arctic coast should a blowout happen. Based on this research, tested strategies for clean-up should be developed and the costs of cleanup determined. Because of their legal interest, as well as their cultural and economic concerns, the Inuvialuit and Inupiat of Alaska should be involved in these meetings.

At the public hearings, the WMAC/NS asked many questions about the impact a blowout might have on wildlife and the environment. The Review Board was dissatisfied with the answers provided by Gulf Resources Canada. We are hopeful that government, like the Review Board, will consider the harm the drilling program may have on wildlife and on the people who depend upon the Beaufort Sea environment.

### 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](mailto:wmacns@web.net) Website: [www.taiga.net/wmac](http://www.taiga.net/wmac)