



Wildlife Watch

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (NORTH SLOPE)
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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A Wildlife Conservation & Management Plan for the Yukon North Slope

People of the Western Arctic have lived near or on the Yukon North Slope for thousands of years. Over the millennia, the Inuvialuit have hunted caribou along the coastal plain, fished the rivers and hunted whales in the Beaufort Sea, and roamed inland to gather berries and trap fur-bearing animals.

This unique relationship between people and the land was given the strength of law in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) by establishing broad conservation principles for the Yukon North Slope. The IFA also called for the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) to develop a Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan to put these principles into practice. The second draft of this Plan is now ready for public review.

Based on the principles of the Final Agreement, the Plan addresses challenges that may arise for wildlife conservation in the next ten years and it provides ways of meeting those challenges.

Part of the North Slope is protected from industrial development by two wilderness parks - Herschel Island Territorial Park and Ivvavik National Park - which were established under the IFA. The possibility of development in the area east of the Babbage

River remains open, but only if it does not interfere in a major way with wildlife, habitat, and traditional native use.

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan

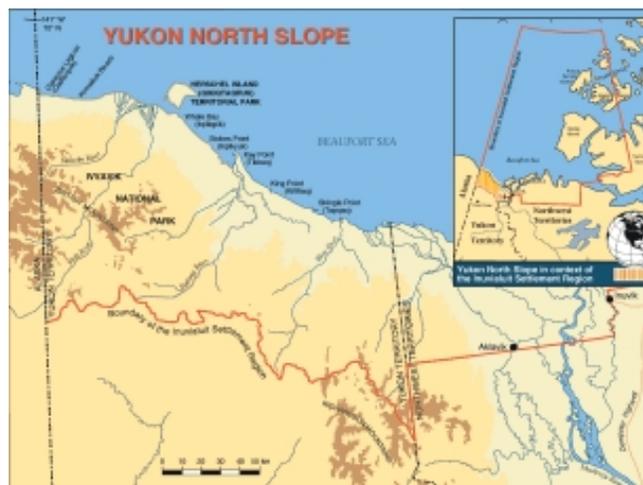
establishes ways of determining whether development will be harmful and mechanisms for regulating development and conserving the wildlife resources of the North Slope. In doing so, it addresses two fundamental questions: how to achieve conservation where there is no development, and how to maintain conservation when development takes place.

How the Plan was Developed

The WMAC(NS) prepared a first draft of the Plan and offered it for public review in 1991. In January of 1992, a working group was formed to review public comments received by the Council on the first draft as well as comments made at the Third Annual North Slope Conference, held in Whitehorse in October 1991. The working group also sent a list of specific questions to government and non-government organizations in-

involved on the North Slope, and to individuals knowledgeable about the special character and dynamics of the area.

On the basis of all the information received, the group revised and rewrote the Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan extensively. The second draft is now available for public review till July 31, 1992.



What's in the Draft Plan

The Plan basically addresses in depth five concerns about the North Slope. These are: protection of the

environment, conservation of wildlife and habitat, cooperation between people, wildlife management decisions, and development.

Protection of the environment:

To protect the North Slope environment, the Council wants to make sure that all surface and ground water is drinkable, that foods such as plants, fish and other wildlife can be eaten safely, and that non-biodegradable wastes are eliminated from the area.

Since much of the threat to the North Slope comes from places or people far away, the Plan also offers provisions to improve our understanding of how outside events affect the North Slope environment and to inform all Canadians about the need for a healthy North Slope.

Conservation of wildlife and habitat:

The North Slope has fed the people of the Western Arctic for generations. The Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan is designed to make sure that generations to come have the same opportunity to harvest high quality food from local fish and other wildlife populations. In order to ensure this, important habitat areas must be identified and protected now, while they are still largely untouched.

Cooperation:

Because the fragile North Slope ecosystem crosses several human borders, protecting it requires cooperation between the Inuvialuit, governments, and agencies. The Plan calls for cooperative management of all fish and other wildlife populations that are shared by two or more jurisdictions. It also specifies that traditional Inuvialuit harvesting practices should always be considered when co-management groups meet, and that Canadian North Slope users should be involved in all decisions affecting the North Slope.

In addition, the Plan asks governments and agencies involved in the North Slope to develop a coordinated response to possible industrial accidents, such as oil spills.

Decision Making:

The North Slope is a vital habitat for much of the wildlife that the Inuvialuit and other people from nearby communities depend on. The Plan provides for user groups to be involved in decisions concerning the North Slope wildlife. It also encourages them to report activities that might harm wildlife, habitat, or the overall environment. Finally, the Council recognized in the Plan the need for user groups, particularly the Inuvialuit, to participate in the review and implementation of research proposals involving North Slope wildlife.

Development:

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan is designed to ensure that development, if and when it happens, does not compromise the environment, wildlife, habitat, or traditional native use of the North Slope. Before development occurs, agencies and environmental impact assessment processes must be adequately prepared to consider both small and large scale development proposals. It is also important to make sure that all parts of the North Slope needing extra protection to conserve wildlife and habitat are adequately protected before development begins.

What Happens Next

The WMAC(NS) invites groups and individuals concerned about the future of the North Slope to examine and comment on the latest draft of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan by the end of July. In August, the Council will review all comments and suggestions received and prepare a final draft. The final version of the Plan will then be submitted with recommendation for approval to the Inuvialuit Game Council and the Yukon and Canadian governments. Once all three parties to the IFA have approved the Plan, implementation can begin.

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
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