



MEETING MINUTES

WMAC (NS) Teleconference
April 18, 2008

Lindsay Staples Chair • **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member) • **Doug Larsen** Yukon Government (Member) • **Ramona Maraj** Carnivore Biologist, Yukon Government • **Christian Bucher** Government of Canada (Acting Member) • **Michelle Christensen** (Secretariat) • **Jennifer Smith** (Secretariat)

A. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am.

B. Review and approval of agenda

Motion to approve the agenda for the April 18, 2008 meeting, as presented.

Moved: Ernest Pokiak

Second: Danny C. Gordon

Motion Carried

C. Polar bear management

The Chair reported that COSEWIC is meeting this weekend (April 19-25) and plans to recommend that polar bear remain a species of “special concern” and that there be a single Designatable Unit (DU) in Canada.

It is important for the Council and the Yukon Government to formally express to the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) and the Wildlife Management Advisory Council NWT (WMAC (NWT)) the desire to meet with them and become more involved in polar bear management, especially given that neither group is planning to submit comments to COSEWIC. As for the Yukon Government, their interest in polar bear management has

increased due to the availability of the carnivore biologist to perform the associated work; the fact that Yukon is becoming more involved in offshore planning; and because of the increase in attention to polar bear as a result of SARA, climate change etc.

The Chair invited the Council's views on recommending a species designation to COSEWIC and the future role of the Council in polar bear management; though he remarks that the Council may appeal directly to the Minister as an alternative avenue by which to voice Council positions re: species status.

Ramona Maraj

- COSEWIC has set criteria that they follow for applying designations. It does not appear at this time that they will consider a multi-DU approach, despite considerations by the Polar Bear Technical Committee which suggest otherwise.
- It is important for WMAC (NS) and YTG to think about how they will respond in future to a declining population.

Doug Larsen

- WMAC (NS) has an obligation to comment to COSEWIC because we have written them on numerous occasions reminding them that we exist and would like to be consulted on matters.
- WMAC (NS) likely cannot challenge much of what is written in the COSEWIC scientific report. However we could support the designation of "special concern" requesting that the criteria by which they assign DU's be changed.
- It is important for our Council to meet with WMAC (NWT) and the IGC.

Christian Boucher

- Agrees that it is important for WMAC (NS) to comment via COSEWIC, and reiterates that WMAC likely cannot challenge the scientific grounds for listing.
- Questions why WMAC (NWT) is not providing comments. Lindsay reports that both the IGC and WMAC (NWT) have ongoing capacity issues.

Ernest Pokiak

- Agrees that our Council should work more closely with WMAC (NWT).
- Suggests that YTG be more involved with the Integrated Oceans Management Plan, and other initiatives, as a way to become more active in polar bear management. Lindsay clarified that Perry Diamond from YTG has been involved in some of these initiatives.

The Chair asked Ramona if an MOA is in place between Yukon and NWT re: polar bear management. Ramona states that the Yukon is currently developing an inter-jurisdictional agreement with NWT, as every other jurisdiction in Canada has such agreements in place.

Danny Gordon

- WMAC (NS) needs to be involved in polar bear management especially because there is a quota system in place, and Herschel Island has been a base for polar bear studies for the last 30-40 years.

The Chair asked Ramona what she thinks about future polar bear occurrence on the North Slope in relation to climate change.

Ramona stated that the general population trend is decreasing, however more bears will likely travel inland searching for food because of poor sea ice conditions, leading to more incidents like the one that happened a few years back, where rafters on the Firth encountered a polar bear on one of their trips. Increased inland encounters could result in the false perception that the population is increasing.

She also reported that the most current Southern Beaufort population estimate is around 1800 animals. A coastal den survey was just completed and very few dens were found. However it is important to keep in mind that big changes in the sea ice this year likely may have impacted denning activity, thus making this year a possible anomaly. Lindsay inquired what the denning habitat is like east of the habitat contained within Ivvavik. Ramona stated that the best habitat is found between the Alaska border and the Babbage/Herschel area: the habitat becomes marginal east of the Blow River.

The Chair clarified that this recent denning work is not reflected in COSEWIC's current assessment.

Ernest commented that development projects should consider using infrared technology to help prevent disturbance to polar bears. He also mentioned the recent occurrence of bears in Deline and the importance of educating people in order to prevent unnecessary "defence" kills.

If YTG pursues a presentation to the IGC regarding polar bear management, Doug and Ramona could be involved in a collaborative approach linking WMAC (NS) and YTG.

Ramona suggested that WMAC (NS) could be involved with the Inupiat –Inuvialuit Management Committee at some level.

The Chair concluded the discussion by determining that WMAC (NS) will respond to COSEWIC by supporting the "special concern" listing and that WMAC (NS) will be more involved in polar bear management in future.

Action Item 08-04-01: The Chair will write a letter to COSEWIC stating the Council's position to support the "special concern" listing for polar bear.

Action Item 08-04-02: Secretariat will draft a letter to the IGC and WMAC (NWT) expressing interest in meeting between now and December 2008 to discuss roles in polar bear management.

Action Item 08-04-03: Christian Bucher will locate a copy of EBA's denning habitat report and send it to Ramona.

D. SDC license renewal and moorage in the Herschel Basin

The Chair announced that comments regarding the renewal of the SDC license as well as general concerns regarding moorage in the Herschel Basin have been sent to the Screening Committee (EISC). In addition to EISC comments, WMAC (NS) sent comments to the Beaufort Sea Strategic Regional Plan of Action (BSStRPA) regarding adding a section in to the Regional Plan of Action regarding MODU storage. BSStRPA planners acted quickly and already incorporated WMAC (NS) comments into the Plan.

The Council discussed a paper written by Dickson in the 80's that assessed mooring locations from the Herschel basin to Alaska and the best way to get a hold of it. Christian will check the Aurora Institute. If he can not locate it, WMAC (NS) will contact the author directly.

Action Item 08-04-04: The Secretariat will obtain a copy of the “Dickson” paper on mooring locations for internal purposes and distribute a copy to the Aklavik HTC, JS, WMAC (NWT), and Parks Canada.

E. Herschel Island Proposed Regulations

The Chair asked the Council if they would support a proposal for a regulation enabling Inuvialuit guides (beneficiaries only) to carry firearms for safety purposes.

The Council agreed that a recommendation to Parks should be made.

Action Item 08-04-05: The Chair will draft a letter to Yukon Parks with a recommendation that states the Council's view that a regulation enabling Inuvialuit guides (beneficiaries only) to carry firearms for safety purposes should be included in the proposed park regulation changes.

F. On the land meeting dates

The Council agreed that the best time to hold the meeting is sometime between July 14th and 31st. The Chair will discuss the dates further with the Secretariat and contact the Council.

G. Miscellaneous

It is noted that the Yukon is being represented by Morris George for the Ocean Action Plan. The Yukon has been asked to participate in BSStRPA, however they have not yet engaged.

Christian updated the Council that the Western Arctic Field Division will soon have a representative on the Council. Three names have been put forward, of which his is one.

H. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am.

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Moved: Danny C. Gordon

Second: Doug Larsen

Motion carried