



MEETING MINUTES

WMAC (NS) Teleconference
January 27, 2009

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

A. Call to Order

The Chair welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.

B. Review and Approval of Agenda

The Chair reviewed the agenda, noting where decisions needed to be made and changed the order of a few items.

Motion 27-01-01

To approve the agenda for the January 27, 2009 meeting, as revised.

Moved: Danny C. Gordon

Second: Doug Larson

Motion carried

C. Ongoing Business – Grizzly bear and polar bear project proposals

Ramona ran through her email to the Secretariat, which addressed the Council's concerns that came out of the December meeting.

She indicated that because of the current recession, she is unsure as to whether or not she will receive Polar Continental Shelf (PCS) funding next year. She also reported that the Parks Canada MOU funds should be spent before March 31, 2009.

A member asked if any DNA work remains to be done. Ramona said no additional DNA work will be done if no new individuals are found, which is likely to be the case. The DNA analysis currently taking place suggests that the population estimate is accurate,

and that by April/May she will have a preliminary idea of population numbers. A final population estimate will be complete within the year.

Ramona walked Council members through the budget and priority activities. Survival analysis through use of radio collars remains the high priority. Collars are scheduled to drop off in summer '09, though she suspects it would be valuable to leave some on until '10 which would mean additional flights at that time.

A member agreed that leaving collars on until '10 would be beneficial. Ramona clarified that the project would need social support for that to take place.

A member asked if bears drop their collars in the dens or on the land. Ramona said that Billy Archie from Aklavik helped researchers retrieve collars from dens last summer.

A member asked if there is a risk in animals destroying collars that have dropped off. Ramona said that other research areas have seen collars dropped into the ocean, however on the North Slope the more common challenge is permafrost and soil melt in the dens, which would render collar retrieval difficult.

Ramona outlined the second project priority, which is to correct collar GPS locations, which involves additional flying. She is hoping that PCS will cover helicopter costs.

The Chair clarified the total fund request: \$8,000 for collar correction, \$6,000 for collar pick up, \$29,000 for telemetry, and \$21,000 for helicopter costs, totaling \$64,000.

Ramona went over the other big project component – den surveys, which relates to climate change. Researchers would visit all den locations, taking measurements, which would help determine how bears select den sites. A model would be developed which could predict how bears might be affected by climate change. Again, she is hoping that PCS would cover this cost. She recommended doing this work sooner rather than later, while dens are still intact, and project momentum is still going, even though this would extend the project.

Ramona outlined an additional project cost of \$2300 to refurbish hunter GPS units, and a further cost to analyze scat and blood samples. A member questioned the importance of these analyses. Ramona said that the analyses are worth investing in because of the information it will provide for a relatively low cost.

Ramona noted that because this project requires auxiliary-on-call technician time, costs are higher.

Ramona reviewed the final project budget: the total request is \$167,000, \$80,000 of which is anticipated outside funding. The total IFA request is \$78,000: \$24,000 from Parks, and \$54,000 from YTG.

The Chair asked about the scope of resource requests for the 10/11 fiscal year.

Ramona said, depending on PCS funding and technician time, that costs would be less than \$50,000. Most of the den work would be completed this summer, though some will remain in 10/11.

Council members expressed support for this project as proposed, noting a concern around the year extension. Ramona clarified that the population estimate would be complete within the year. The Chair remarked that the population estimate is the big item folks have been waiting for, so as long as that is complete, that is what is important.

Ramona added that there is potential for the work in 10/11 to alter the population estimate that comes out within the 09/10 year, so when the estimate is released, it must be couched properly.

Ramona reported that she is meeting with the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (AHTC) on February 26th and asked Danny to let her know what items in addition to the grizzly bear project, they would like her to discuss.

A member wanted to make sure that the population estimate would be complete within the year, and expressed concern over the high cost of the den surveys.

Ramona described that the den surveys are expensive because of the flying time involved, and interpretation of the landscape in the absence of mapped soil and permafrost information.

The Chair concluded that the Council would recommend \$78,000 to the grizzly bear project for 2009/10.

Ramona proceeded to review the polar bear project proposed for 2009/2010.

She reported that Shelley Marshall is leaving tomorrow for Inuvik to find archival information related to polar bear. Some of the sources she will explore include Herschel Island interviews, COPE and others.

The Chair clarified that she is investigating what information already exists in the ISR between now and the end of March, and that this activity falls under the \$8400 recommended from last year.

Ramona provided information on the anthropologist's qualifications, Chris Watkinson, who is willing to spend 10 days developing the survey instrument and analysis for \$9,000.

The Chair clarified that overall the project cost is \$21,000. He questioned the validity of the work in the absence of a comparable study in Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs, and Paulatuk.

Ramona agreed that studies in the other communities would be valuable and asked if Danny could validate this. Danny agreed.

Ernest suggested that surveying these additional communities would involve WMAC NWT.

A member raised that collecting already existing information is important, but that finding out if there are hunters in Aklavik to justify the surveys is key.

Danny said that he hasn't been out for the last 8 years for polar bear because conditions get so rough, and if polar bears are eating a lot of seal their hides yellow which reduces the value of the hide. He said that more people hunt grizzly bears than polar bears because polar bear hunting involves rough conditions.

Ramona clarified that she is not just looking for information on polar bears, but for information related to sea ice, and changing conditions, as Danny just described.

A member stated that nationally and internationally there is interest in polar bear traditional knowledge work, and wondered if outside funding sources could be tapped.

The Chair reiterated his concern about how this study will line up with other studies in the region, where polar bear hunting is more prevalent, especially given that YTG and WMAC NS are new players in polar bear management. He strongly suggested collaborating with NWT.

Ramona and the Council discussed talking with Marsha Branigan, Larry Carpenter, and Frank Pokiak about collaborating, possibly, on a multi-year project.

The Chair suggested that a community-by-community cost could be proposed, and that GNWT would have to be approached right away, as next year's budget is likely currently under discussion. He clarified that the communities involved would include: Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik, and Aklavik, and that the study could happen over 2 years. He also suggested reasons why GNWT might agree to collaborate: the interest is there, WMAC NS brings a positive track record in doing this kind of work, and YTG currently has a bear biologist on staff and GNWT does not.

Ramona agreed to talk to Larry and Marsha, copying any correspondence to WMAC NS.

The Chair suggested following that, project leads should draft out the work plan as applied to the five communities over one or two years, including the resources required for each community. Ramona asked about numbers of hunters in the five communities.

Danny clarified his statement earlier about polar bear hunting activity, stating that he was only speaking for himself – he's not aware of anyone getting a bear in the last five years in Aklavik, but the interest in hunting polar bear is there.

The Chair added that guided hunts that would be an important feature of the study as well. He stated that we need to firm up GNWT and WMAC NWT's interest in doing a collaborative study, before putting a proposal forward.

Ramona asked about timelines. The Chair suggested that these groups are probably deciding on funding within the next month, so sending out a one-pager earmarking money, getting sign off on survey design, and confirmation of study outputs would be valuable.

The Chair concluded that WMAC NS would approve-in principle allocating \$21,000 for the polar bear project, subject to what we hear back from NWT.

Ramona cautioned that if the project was delayed, the anthropologist's availability could be compromised, so suggested that at the very least he be involved right away in the survey design.

Ramona left the call at 4:00pm

C. Ongoing Business – Allocation of Environment Canada's \$15,000 IFA-Research Funds

The Chair explained that Environment Canada wants to sign a Contribution Agreement with the Council to ensure that \$15,000 is spent on its prioritized projects, allocating \$10,000 towards Jadah's data quality outputs for all communities, which are consistent with Wayne's findings, and \$3500 towards the Gathering, where the Coop's direction will be reviewed. \$1500 would be absorbed by WMAC NS as an administrative fee.

A member agreed with the proposal, because it is consistent with Wayne's recommendations, but expressed concern over Jadah's level of expertise.

The Chair clarified that she is the only person competent in dealing with the database.

The Council agreed and the Chair concluded that WMAC NS would proceed to finalize the Contribution Agreement. He added that he was at the Porcupine Caribou Management Board meeting on Sunday and folks were in agreement with respect to the need to assess the value of Borderlands.

Action 27-01-01: The WMAC NS Secretariat will work with the Chair on organizing a joint meeting between relevant co-management bodies (WMAC NWT, PCMB, GRRB, etc.) to discuss support for the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op within the calendar year.

C. Ongoing Business – Polar Bear Round Table Meeting update and discussion about WMAC NS representation on PBAC and PBTC.

The Chair updated the Council on his and Ernest's attendance at the Round Table and noted that he wrote up a Memo to File on issues and outcomes.

Action 27-01-02: The WMAC NS Secretariat will distribute the Chair's

Memo to File on the Polar Bear Round Table meeting to all Council members.

The Chair noted the upcoming Polar Bear Technical Committee meeting in Whitehorse, and members agreed to have Doug represent the Council.

The Chair noted some of his main concerns coming out of the Round Table meeting which centered around Canada's lack of consultation with Inuvialuit on a number of fronts. He suggested the need for protocol on consultation, given the apparent loss of corporate memory with regard to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA). He asked Christian if he shared similar observations with respect to Canada.

Christian agreed that at the national level people are unaware of their legal obligations, not only with respect to polar bears, but with other species as well.

Action 27-01-03: The WMAC NS Chair will draft a letter to the appropriate minister establishing protocol on consultation, and will circulate it to members, and to the IGC and WMACNWT chairs for their consideration and signing as well.. He noted that Nunavut has protocol with Environment Canada.

D. Meetings

The Chair asked members about availability for a March meeting. After some discussion he concluded that March did not look good, and that he would be in touch with the Secretariat to possibly arrange a meeting in April, though the Inuvialuit members commented that an April meeting would also pose problems.

With regard to the Borderlands proposal for 09/10, because Michael was absent on the call, the Chair decided that a decision on that would have to be delayed.

A member commented that he read through the statement of work and thought that it was slightly on the general side, though was encouraged by their focus on review. The Secretariat clarified that the University analysis would not be receiving IFA funds, and that the 09/10 IFA-funded work has not been developed yet, as it depends on the outcome of the University synthesis and possibly a meeting between co-management groups.

The Chair stated that the Council would re-visit this issue another day.

E. WMAC NS Secretariat Wage Review

The Secretariat left the call at 4:30pm so the Council could discuss the wage review.

The Council discussed the Wage Review document prepared by the Secretariat and agreed on adjusting the base salary from \$48,000 per annum to \$55,000 per annum.

Motion 27-01-02

To approve the WMAC NS Secretariat's wage increase from a base salary of \$48,000 per annum to \$55,000 per annum, retroactive to her anniversary date of November 8, 2008.

Annual adjustments for FIDIPI (the federal annual adjustment calculation) will be made in line with the Joint Secretariat's adjustments.

Moved: Christian Bucher

Second: Doug Larson

Motion carried

F. Adjournment

The Chair thanked everyone for their time on the call and adjourned the meeting at 4:50pm.

Motion 27-01-03

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Moved: Ernest Pokiak

Second: Doug Larson

Motion carried