



Yukon North Slope Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan Public Engagement Summary

Prepared by the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)
July 2021

Background

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) has prepared a Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan for the Yukon North Slope. The Council was established under the 1984 Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA). It advises the appropriate federal and territorial ministers with respect to the management and administration of wildlife, habitat and harvesting on the Yukon North Slope. The IFA requires the Council to prepare and recommend a wildlife conservation and management plan for the area to the appropriate authorities.

The Yukon North Slope Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan (“WCMP,” “the Plan”) builds on the special conservation regime established in the IFA for Yukon North Slope, which includes Ivavik National Park, Herschel Island – Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park, Aullaviat/Aungauniarvik (the eastern Yukon North Slope), and Tarium Niryutait Marine Protected Area. It brings together Inuvialuit knowledge and Western science knowledge about this special part of Northern Yukon and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region.

Importantly, the Plan is the result of extensive collaboration with Inuvialuit organizations, Government of Yukon, Government of Canada and management partners in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Prior to recommending a final plan to the appropriate authorities, the Council sought public comment on the draft plan. This report summarizes the engagement and comments received.

Engagement throughout the planning process

The Plan has been many years in the making. Community involvement has been a priority from its early stages. Prior to drafting, the Council worked closely with the community of Aklavik to document existing knowledge and co-create new information, which have since informed the Plan. It builds on the recommendations in the Aklavik Inuvialuit Community Conservation Plan, the Inuvik Inuvialuit Community Conservation Plan and the Tuktoyaktuk Community Conservation Plan as well. Inuvialuit knowledge and values remain central to the Plan and the Council has engaged extensively with the Aklavik community, particularly via the Community Corporation and the Hunters and Trappers Committee, throughout the planning process. The Plan is also informed by companion management plans for Ivavik National Park and Herschel Island - Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park.

Once an early draft of the Plan was prepared, the Council worked with its management partners to review and receive comments. The feedback received during this phase has improved the Plan greatly and the draft Plan presented for public review reflects this valuable input. Written comments on earlier drafts were submitted by:

- Inuvialuit Game Council and Staff
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Joint Secretariat Staff
- Wildlife Management Advisory Council (NWT)
- Fisheries Joint Management Committee
- Government of Yukon
- Government of Canada – Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Government of Canada – Canadian Wildlife Service
- Government of Canada – Parks Canada
- Porcupine Caribou Management Board

Comments on earlier drafts were also shared verbally through engagement sessions, captured in meeting minutes, and incorporated as appropriate. A record of early engagement meetings and presentations is presented below.

List of Meetings and Information Session Leading to the WCMP Draft

Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee

- Nov 6, 2018
- Nov 26, 2018
- February 12, 2019
- September 11, 2019 - Presentation of draft plan

Inuvik Community Corporation

- Feb 11, 2019
- Meeting planned for Sept/Oct/Nov postponed due to quorum and availability

Aklavik Community Corporation

- Nov 6, 2018
- February 12, 2019
- September 11, 2019 - Presentation of draft plan

Tuktoyaktuk Hunters and Trappers Committee

- Meeting planned for Feb 13, 2019; postponed due to weather
- August 28th, 2019 – Presentation of draft plan

Aklavik Elders

- Nov 6, 2018
- February 12, 2019
- Sept 11, 2019 - Presentation of draft plan

Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation

- Meeting planned for Feb 13, 2019; postponed due to weather
- Meeting planned for Aug/Sept – postponed due to Tuk information request (info subsequently sent)

Community of Aklavik

- Nov 26, 2018

Inuvialuit Game Council

Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Committee

- Feb 11, 2019
- October 8, 2019 – Presentation of draft plan

- Dec 4, 2018
- March 6, 2019
- September 24-26, 2019 - Presentation of draft plan

WMAC (NWT)

- Meeting planned for March 6, 2019
- September 13, 2019 – joint meeting
Presentation of draft plan

Joint Secretariat Staff

- August 6, 2019- Presentation of draft plan

Porcupine Caribou Management Board

- September 27, 2019 – Presentation of draft plan

Environmental Impact Screening Committee

- Nov 21, 2019- Presentation of draft plan

Government of Yukon Staff

- October 7, 2019 – Presentation of draft plan

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

- Chair to Chair briefings – July, Aug
- Chair briefing with IRC Chair and staff – Oct 28, 2019
- Ongoing discussions throughout 2020 and 2021

Throughout the planning process, the Council also received a number of support letters regarding the plan generally and specific to the recommendation of a strengthened conservation regime for Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik. A list of these correspondences is included below.

Letters of Support Received

To support Inuvialuit Conservation and Protected (IPCA) Area process:

- Aklavik Community Corporation, January 22, 2019
- Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee, February 19, 2019
- Inuvik Community Corporation, March 1, 2019
- Inuvik Hunters and Trappers Committee, Feb 19, 2019
- Porcupine Caribou Management Board, March 4, 2019
- Inuvialuit Game Council to support IPCA process, March 8, 2019
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to support IPCA process, March 11, 2019
- Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee, Aklavik Community Corporation, and Aklavik Elders, February 11, 2021

To support WCMP and/or Inuvialuit Conservation and Protected Area (IPCA) process and a strengthened conservation regime:

- Aklavik Community Corporation motion to support IPCA process, Sept 25, 2019
- Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee to support IPCA process, Oct 16, 2019
- Aklavik Elders Committee, 2019
- Porcupine Caribou Management Board to support the IPCA process, Oct 30, 2019
- Vuntut Gwitchin Government, February 27, 2020
- Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, March 3, 2020
- Gwich'in Tribal Council, March 3, 2020
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, January 22, 2021

- Porcupine Caribou Management Board, March 1, 2021
- Inuvialuit Game Council, February 2021

Public engagement process

Once planning partners had reviewed and provided comment on the draft Plan and feedback was incorporated, WMAC NS delivered the draft for public review. A 30-day public review period ran from June 7 2021 to July 7, 2021. The public was invited to provide comments via a survey form on wmacns.ca, where comments could be submitted as text, Word, or PDF.

In order to make the public aware of the review period and the engagement platform, a number of mediums were employed:

- Print – Yukon News black and white print ad, 3 col x 4”, with circulation once a week for four weeks
- Radio – 20 radio spots over the course of 30 days on The Rush (CKRW), 30 seconds long
- Social media – Posts to both WMAC NS Facebook page and Twitter account

A press release was posted on the WMAC NS News page and social media platforms. It was also circulated to:

- Yukon News
- Inuvik Drum
- CBC North
- Klondike Sun
- Whitehorse Star
- CHON FM News
- CKRW FM News
- CFYT FM News

Letters were also sent to relevant ISR management and co-management organizations and relevant organizations neighbouring the ISR (e.g. Vuntut Gwichin First Nation, Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board), making them aware of the public process and providing additional opportunity to provide comment on the draft Plan. These groups had been contacted earlier in the Plan development and review phases, as well.

Participation

Comments were received from two organizations. No comments were received from individuals.

In addition to the broad audience of the radio and print ads, the webpage hosting the online engagement received 58 views during the review period and the press release hosted on the Council website received 52 views during the same period. The first Facebook post announcing the review period reached 375 people and had 28 engagements, while the second post reached 113 people and had 19 engagements.

What we heard

The comments received through the 30-day public review period are positive and in support of the Plan. Comments fall into several categories, as summarized below.

Formalized management framework for Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik:

- A formal conservation designation for Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik, as recommended in the Plan is important for a number of reasons, including its contribution to national protected area targets.

Species conservation:

- Emphasizing the importance of protection for the Canadian portion of the Porcupine caribou herd range is a critical part of the Plan.
- The risk of pathogens and invasive species is on par with parasites and diseases, thus emphasis on these threats to wildlife and Indigenous livelihoods should be augmented in the Plan.

Indigenous-led management for the Yukon North Slope:

- The connection between the Plan, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, and the leadership role of Inuvialuit in conservation on the Yukon North Slope is well-established in the Plan and its importance is clear.
- More information is required to show the importance of developing and implementing a Yukon North Slope economic strategy within the context of a wildlife conservation plan.

Protection of key wildlife habitat:

- The relationship between healthy wildlife populations, their habitats, and Indigenous livelihoods is central to conservation and the Plan emphasizes this.
- The identification and application of species-focused conservation measures and the aim of broad scale conservation and connectivity are helpful approaches to meeting conservation needs on the Yukon North Slope.
- Providing more guidance on how those responsible for management will meet certain outcomes, particularly under Strategy B3, would be helpful.
- A science-based climate change wildlife vulnerability assessment that combines local and traditional knowledge with a science-based climate change wildlife vulnerability assessment would be a powerful tool in meeting wildlife conservation goals.

Editorial comments:

- The Plan is very long but comprehensive in its scope.
- The final draft effectively incorporated comments from previous review opportunities.
- The objectives are clear and link well with the IFA and the conservation goals for the YNS, within a biocultural context and climate change context.
- Provide the reader with some context for the ISR Southern Beaufort polar bear tag administration model.

Next steps

The Plan has been revised to reflect the input received during this public engagement. The Council has now recommended the Plan to the appropriate authorities for consideration and signing.

Once the Plan is finalized, it will be distributed to communities, partners, and relevant organizations. When it is appropriate to travel, the Council will present the Plan and the suite of supporting resources to ISR communities.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the community of Aklavik, particularly the Hunters and Trappers Committee, the Community Corporation, and the Elders Committee, for all the knowledge and guidance that supported the development of this Plan. The Council would also like to express gratitude to our partners, who reviewed and provided comments on earlier drafts of the Plan. The Council appreciates all the feedback received throughout this process, which has helped to make the Plan the best version possible.