



## MEETING MINUTES

# WMACNS QUARTERLY MEETING

February 26-28, 2019

Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, Whitehorse, YT

## Tuesday, February 26, 2018

Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, Whitehorse, YT

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**Lindsay Staples** (Chair), **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Matt Clarke** Yukon Government (Alternate), **Dave Tavares** Government of Canada (Member), **Tyler Kuhn** Yukon Government (Member), **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Craig Machtans** Government of Canada (Alternate), **Allison Thompson** (WMAC NS Staff), **Kaitlin Wilson** (WMACNS Staff), **Laurence Carter** MSc Student, **Stephanie Muckenheim** Yukon Government, **Harmony Marcotte** Yukon College student

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### A. Call to Order

Lindsay Staples (Chair) called the meeting to order at 9:02 am.

### B. Review and Approval of Agenda

The Council reviewed the agenda. No revisions or additions were made.

***Motion 2019-02-01 Approval of Agenda – Moved by Tyler, seconded by Danny Gordon.***

### C. Review and Approval of Minutes

November Meeting Minutes – Joint WMAC Meeting

No comments.

November Meeting Minutes – Meeting with AHTC

No comments.

November Meeting Minutes – WMAC NS Quarterly

Lindsay gave a short update on the Inuvialuit Guardians funding application that has just been submitted by IRC & IGC. There has yet to be a meaningful discussion with other parties (e.g. WMACs) about how this program would look or be implemented.

Issues include governance models, relationship with CBMP and new proactive

management program on the EYNS, the need for model sustainability, identifying priorities that are regionally relevant, etc.

***Motion 2019-02-02 Approval of November 2018 Minutes – Moved by Ernest Pokiak, seconded by Dave Tavares.***

#### **D. Review of Action Items**

WMACNS staff led the review of action items.

#### **E. Financial Report**

*WMAC NS 2018-19 Quarterly Budget for Q3*

- Allison and Kaitlin will work with the accountant to ensure that the \$100,000 assigned to the Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan (and Round River costs) from the Joint Secretariat is reflected in 1020, additional revenue, and will have the accountants remove the 3019 code.
- The current expected 2018-2019 rollover reflects approximately 15% of the budget
- Staff worked with the JS and confirmed that the Inuvialuit Participation budget did not receive an increase and is just subject to FDDIPI (inflation-related) increases.

*WMAC NS 2019-20 Draft Budget*

- The Regular Meetings: Travel budget is higher than it has been in the past, but can be revisited based on the Council's planned meeting locations in 2019-20 (\$15,000 is low based on a meeting @ Herschel or Ivavik but if the Council met in Husky Lakes it could be feasible)
  - o Weather is variable in Ivavik around Labour day
  - o Herschel: the Rangers would only be there if there are late season cruise ships (timing of end of season is variable)
- Some money has been placed in 'consulting/legal', part of which will be for continuing to engage Jen Smith and the rest is for some small legal pieces from John Donihee (related to regulations and the Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan (WCMP) section on development)
- When is the next North Slope Conference? 2020-21 fiscal year
- The \$60,000 in 'special projects' for consultation is a large number but reflects the cost of special meetings in Aklavik, Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk with the HTC and CCs. Additional meetings would include gathering the IFA signatories to discuss the WCMP.

***Motion 2019-02-03 Notional approval of 2019-2020 WMAC NS budget – moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Ernest Pokiak***

*Round River Conservation Studies – Work to Date and Budget*

Lindsay has been liaising with US Foundations about funding related to the WCMP and proposed designation on the Eastern Yukon North Slope (EYNS).

RRCS provided a written update on February 26, 2019 to the Council with the status of their various projects, expected timelines, and financial needs for the rest of 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Comments:

- Moose models: Mike Sutor and Colleen Arnison had substantial comments related to historic Ivavik surveys not included; there is a desire to see a second draft for another round of review for a final set of maps
- Polar bear dens: some significant datasets are coming available this month; USGS is producing an updated data set for the Beaufort Sea based on the collar data; Parks Canada is doing a polar bear den survey in March; YTG is doing a polar bear den survey for Herschel island – these could all inform the data available for that map.
- Grizzly bear habitat model: the maps will have some significant management implications. Council needs significant time to review
- Decision Support Tool: RRCS has indicated that the intent for this tool is that it will be query-able; it's important that the platform is more than just static maps, can incorporate new data when it becomes available, and there is a clear structure for ownership and access, and that the tool is useful for the Inuvialuit. Some points the Council considered:
  - o The Council would like to see what this type of tool looks like and what its functionality would be in order to decide how or if the Council will pursue it
  - o The Council needs to consider how much ongoing money (if any) would need to go to RRCS for support in years to come
  - o The Council prefers to have the model products finalized and of high quality before considering various scenarios, with a DST that is query-able coming after (if needed at all depending on future conservation designations for the Eastern Yukon North Slope)
  - o The payoff from having a usable DST is deferred – it won't come until after significant use
  - o The major value-added component of the DST is in climate change modeling
  - o If the DST is an internal tool, maybe not worth the financial and time investment at this point – useful if publicly available
  - o WMAC NS' primary function is not environmental assessment
- Climate change adaptation scenarios: This work has been done elsewhere and seems like a good idea.

WMAC NS will provide direction to RRCS to put the DST work on hold, prioritizing the products needed to finalize the WCMP. This fiscal year, the Council will transfer the remaining \$50,000 budgeted for RCSS work, indicating that the \$44,000 that is going to be carried forward to 2019-20 should be focused on the non-DST items, and that the

Council needs the components for the WCMP by the end of April. The Council will keep the \$20,000 that is earmarked in the draft 2019-2020 budget for additional RRCS work, to be paid out upon completion of all deliverables.

**Action 2019-02-01 Staff reach out to Taku River Tlingit to ask about their experience with RRCS and the mapping platform.**

**Action 2019-02-02 Staff to follow up with RRCS to provide direction and clarity on their work, WMAC NS funding, and expected deadlines. Request a new workplan and budget based on Council decision to put the DST on hold for now.**

## **F. Report from Chair**

### Joint Secretariat:

Update on hiring for Executive Director position – no successful candidates have been found at this time.

### Polar Bear Technical Committee:

Revision of Terms of Reference is ongoing (to be reviewed by Polar Bear Administration Committee).

Parties are looking to have a day dedicated to technical topics (especially for population modeling) at future meetings.

Status table continues to be a major point of discussion; Traditional Knowledge is now included in the status table and there is a new working group to look at how well that Traditional Knowledge column is functioning; PBAC recommended adding a management objectives column; PBTC discussed this but did not come to consensus; a working group will examine the issue in detail.

A new working group has been formed for consideration of abilities and drawbacks of current methods in polar bear research (lead by Tom Jung).

### Organizational Review of Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board:

Council Chair was interviewed by the consulting company (Stratos) conducting the Board review.

Review was instigated at the Yukon Forum; Yukon First Nations concerns, in particular, have driven the need for a review.

### Meeting with Minister Frost and Community Consultation:

Update deferred to discussion about WCMP.

## **G. Decision Items – Part 1 (IFA Research Funds)**

WMAC Staff outlined the projects supported to date and the new projects for consideration for the remaining IFA research funds.

#### Polar Bear Population Census

- Tom Jung (YG) provided an overview of the proposal
- 150 hours of flight time are proposed, but this may be low given the size of the area (North and South Beaufort)
- Only adults and sub-adults will be sampled (no young of the year)
- Five crews surveying concurrently over 3-4 spring seasons
- Planned for late March/early April
- Biopsy darting is the planned sampling tool (no human contact) for mark-recapture across years
- **Total requested: \$45,000**

Ernest raised concern about disturbance of the bears. Tom addressed these concerns.

#### Wildlife monitoring and Inuvialuit student internship on Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park

- Wildlife monitoring on Herschel Island
- Student internship
- Partnership with Ivvavik camera trap program
- **Total requested: \$6000**

***Motion 2019-02-04 The Council supports the use of IFA research funds in support of the polar bear population census (\$45,000) and the wildlife monitoring and internship on Herschel Island (\$6000). Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Danny Gordon.***

***Motion 2019-02-05 Council recommends that remaining IFA research funds (\$19,000) for the Government of Canada be directed to support the Yukon North Slope muskox research program, including Laurence Carter's MSc work. Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Danny Gordon.***

**ADJOURNED at 4:25 PM.**

## **Wednesday, February 27, 2019**

Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, Whitehorse, YT

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**Lindsay Staples** (Chair), **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Matt Clarke** Yukon Government (Alternate), **Dave Tavares** Government of Canada (Member), **Tyler Kuhn** Yukon Government (Member), **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Craig Machtans** Government of Canada (Alternate), **Allison Thompson**

(WMACNS Staff), **Kaitlin Wilson** (WMACNS Staff), **Jennifer Smith** (Consultant), **Rob Florkiewicz** Yukon Government, **Laurence Carter** MSc Student, **Stephanie Muckenheim** Yukon Government, **Harmony Marcotte** Yukon College student, **Barb Coppard** Yukon Government

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## **G. Decision Items – Part 2**

### Polar Bear Harvest Regulations

- Rob Florkiewicz (YG) provided a summary of the history of the legislative amendments and walked the Council through the Polar Bear Memorandum of Understanding (a signed agreement among Parties that guides the regulatory amendment process).
- Regulations have moved through various drafts over several years to ensure it is consistent with the IFA.
- This will be the first time YG will recognize a tag from another jurisdiction (NWT).
- Ernest asked about the potential for sport hunting – any tags issued for sport hunting would be issued through the Inuvialuit HTC (enabled by Yukon legislation), hunt would have to occur either on foot or by dog team (i.e. bylaws set by the HTC will prevail).
- Regulation refers only to the South Beaufort subpopulation.
- Dave noted that it is possible for Inuvialuit to hunt polar bear in Ivvavik National Park without a tag, hunting with a tag in this area would be voluntary compliance.
- Hunting season for Yukon will mirror NWT season.
- Many hunters learn about the reporting requirements from HTC – it's important that the HTCs have a solid understanding of the requirements and any changes in order to best support hunters.
- Polar bears in dens or building a den are protected elsewhere in legislation, so this protection requirement was not built in to these particular changes.
- There is still a discrepancy between YG and GNWT in the determination of sex based on provided evidence, but, for polar bear, there are no effects for harvesters on the ground.
- These amendments should be in front of Cabinet in March 2019, to have them in place for publication in April in the hunting synopsis – failing that, they can be publicized elsewhere to still have the changes in effect for the next hunting season (December).
- YG will share the most recent package with the Council.
- Lindsay will present this discussion to IGC in early March.
- There is still a need to update the federal Wild Animal Regulations to bring regulations for Ivvavik National Park into line with the Operational Arrangement for Coordinated Southern Beaufort Tag Administration.

***Motion 2019-02-06 The Council supports proceeding to Cabinet with the latest drafting of the Yukon Government polar bear regulations. Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Ernest Pokiak.***

**Action 2019-02-03 WMAC staff will draft a letter to Yukon Government indicating the Council's support and motion regarding the amendment of Yukon polar bear regulations.**

## **H. Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan**

### *Presentation from Joan Eamer*

Joan Eamer called in and provided a presentation on her progress on the Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan.

Joan suggested that the companion report chapters undergo an expert/peer review before finalization and institutional review.

Graphic design for the Plan will need to incorporate the idea that the front matter can also be used as a standalone document if desired. It would have to include a simplified map and diagram of objectives and strategies. This can function as the 'summary for policymakers'.

How to deal with the map products from RRCS:

- Council has a strategizing session after receiving final maps from RRCS to think about which maps (and combinations of maps) are required for the different plan components
- This can go along with a map atlas
- May need to engage a cartographer and graphic designer to present the message
- It will be important to document how the maps are created (E.g. for a map of conservation values, the reader should see something visually which can explain how the maps were created and combined (infographic approach) – needs to be in the main plan in case people don't look at the companion report
- Ensure RRCS and Joan are linked in their work and products to avoid work duplication
- Over the next few months (by April), Joan requires maps that support key sections and messages for drafting the WCMP
  - Joan needs list of maps beforehand
  - Joan will track mapping needs as content is drafted
  - **Needs to go in WMAC NS in notional budget for 2019-20**
- There is a spreadsheet from RRCS with values and layers – some were 'not currently planned' – Joan noted that she had reviewed this with Kim and that it needs to be kept updated, as she is using this as her reference for what is available and planned.
- Theme A: change from "harvest access" to "Inuvialuit Use"

#### Goal for the WCMP:

- Council likes reliance on the IFA
- Detailed comments can be captured in tracked changes in the document when Council members submit their feedback
- The goal reads well and reflects the Council discussion from last fall, great for the stage the WCMP is at
- A couple years back there was a WCMP strategy meeting on how the new WCMP would relate to the old WCMP. Wondering about 'conservation requirements for Inuvialuit use' and the process for getting there in this WCMP
  - That would be covered in context part of YNS, which sets the jurisdictional context, but is not filled out yet. Staff will work with Joan on this piece.
  - The story and context is important - the leadup to the IFA, Berger report, then what ended up in the IFA 12.2 and 12.3 and the Withdrawal Order. The WCMP clarifies what all this is about and resolves the conflict between those IFA clauses – to answer the question 'what are the conservation requirements as they apply to wildlife, habitat and Inuvialuit use' and what's required to achieve that goal.
- It would be nice if the piece on 'change' was broader – it's not just rapid environmental change occurring on the YNS - human use is changing too, in time and space. This framing also leads to the question – if it's not undergoing rapid change, do we still focus our conservation efforts on it?
- Productivity (and biological productivity) is a theme throughout the IFA – one way to address change is by trying to maintain biological productivity, because (according to the IFA), this needs to be maintained to maintain Inuvialuit use.
- The WCMP goal as written addresses 12(2) well but not 12(3). We need to pay attention to 12(3) – can't be an afterthought

Joan asked: am I straying too far into a 'state of the environment' report? We want to provide evidence about the YNS and its conservation needs, but need to understand how to bound that writing.

- The council agreed that the samples provided from the WCMP are starting to feel like a 'state of the environment' report

#### Additional comments on the introductory materials:

- Consider the order of discussion so people know what the 'conservation vision is' when we are framing up the WCMP
- Ultimately, the WCMP completes the unfinished business from the IFA and the Plan should state this explicitly (can include the specific clauses that provide some conflict)
- The companion document can have a section providing detail on the institutional framework for the YNS and a lot of that information will come from the 2002

## WCMP

- The addition of the climate change principle is good
- 12(3) gets picked up through IFA goal 2

### Comments on Outline of Objectives and Strategies:

- Council likes the succinctness; the structure and general content are good
- We are already at the upper end of how many strategies we should have (since each strategy has 1+ performance measure)
- There was some discussion about theme A – it feels like a ‘megatheme’ – should it be two separate themes that are obviously linked?
  - Further to this, in terms of the maps being included in theme A - if wildlife habitat and Inuvialuit use are both map heavy, we could end up with a content-rich, long theme
  - *Consider breaking up theme A into two and parsing out theme C into the other themes – but ensure that the broader ecosystem function considerations are not lost*
  - Inuvialuit can fit with both populations and habitat (access) and will need to be drawn into both habitat and population discussions
- The front matter of the WCMP speaks to wildlife and habitat, but not ecosystems – are we going beyond the IFA mandate?
  - *Joan will add context to the introduction of the WCMP explaining that the IFA is a 1980s document, and drawing the link between the IFA and current management, including how we not consider ecosystems*
- Joan noted that the selection of focal species doesn’t reflect the marine at all – should she add beluga?
  - This has come up in the past and beluga has been added and taken off the list (was taken off in Aklavik, but was added during a session with FJMC on nearshore/offshore values)
  - Beluga is umbrella species for the MPA off the YNS coast
  - The Council wants to ensure the focus remains on the terrestrial, not the marine; Joan can include beluga but treat the species lightly
- Theme B talks about ‘populations of harvested wildlife’ but not all wildlife is harvested – how to reconcile this?
  - *Generalize theme B to wildlife [then species at risk can be folded in]*
  - If we focus on ‘important or at risk’ wildlife, then we could end up leaving out things that aren’t important or at risk – *work on wording*
- Theme C – *Joan agreed to rework this section based on comments on Theme A*
  - Good to see all 3 levels of biological diversity (including genetic level) – make sure to keep this when reworking
  - Soften some wording, e.g. ‘eliminate’ contaminants
  - Contaminants and similar issue-based strategies all need to fit in one place, e.g. Theme C
  - *Joan will think critically about the content of Themes A through C, based on the Council’s comments, and the Council will re-visit this conversation*

*in April*

- Theme D
  - John Donihee will help with drafting
  - *Combine D1-1 and D1-2 into 'regulatory regime'*
  - Theme D gives the chance for WMAC to say, from the perspective of conservation, what activities are allowed/not allowed
  - Need the IPCA and this Theme D to reference/complement/inform each other, but not duplicate each other. The plan needs to be the driver.
  - The Council discussed how much detail and prescriptiveness should be included under this theme in the WCMP – this is not a land use planning exercise, and this plan is a conservation plan so the utility of this plan is in highlighting conservation values
  - This section, along with Theme A, should specify and emphasize the maintenance of the Withdrawal Order
- Template for Strategies:
  - The format makes sense, but the example strategy is 4 pages long, which could lead to a very dense Plan
  - Suggestion to keep strategies to 2 pages max, so that it can be pulled out for a handout
    - It was noted that it could be hard to balance this page limit out including maps and visuals
  - Joan can look at the Ivavik plan to see how it dealt with this
  - Think about moving the performance indicators up near the start of the strategy
  - Link the plans/programs table more closely to the strategy
  - The Council likes the 'plans and programs' table
  - Is 'status of monitoring' a subcomponent of existing plans/programs?  
*Joan will try to combine these two pieces.*
  - Keep all 'state of the environment' info in the companion document
- Species-based writing sample
  - *Joan is looking for feedback on how she integrated IK into the companion report sample chapter for Dolly Varden char (she didn't separate IK out)*
  - The Council did not address this; staff will follow up
- Issue-based sample
  - Both samples were comprehensive, well done and ambitious
  - Focus on key issues and gaps rather than being so comprehensive – the plan could be dated very quickly if it is data-heavy, but the key questions and issues will have better shelf life
- Proposed format for summary table
  - Use theme/objective/strategy and performance measure -> the rest is in the plan
  - A fuller table can be produced separately from the plan; it could be a communication piece to help with sign off or implementation

## Discussion points and questions

- Who is the intended audience(s)?
  - The primary audience is those organizations with management authority for the YNS – IGC, HTCs, EISC
  - A secondary audience is organizations with an interest in the YNS – Canadian River Expeditions, Yukon Conservation Society, etc.
- Ultimately, the WCMP needs to be understandable by an informed 3<sup>rd</sup> party who doesn't know anything about YNS. They need to be able to derive the vision, etc.
- Other products could be developed in the future for the public at large with no knowledge of the EYNS (similar to a Parks Canada publication for the general Canadian public)
- Length and detail
  - The strategy example was really well laid out, it is easy to jump around to relevant pieces – *Joan will look at shortening the contaminants strategy example*

Overall, the Council is pleased with the content Joan has produced so far and the direction she is going in.

**Action 2019-02-04 WMAC Staff will speak with RRCS to get a list of RRCS' final expected maps; staff will keep Joan updated on RRCS' work and map products.**

**Action 2019-02-05 Staff to organize a meeting in April, including RRCS and Joan Eamer, to strategize the map components of the WCMP.**

**Action item 2019-02-06 Staff to circulate Joan's updated materials; Council to provide feedback.**

**Action item 2019-02-07 Council to provide feedback on the integration of IK in the Dolly Varden sample section of her Feb 17<sup>th</sup> materials**

## EYNS Designation and IPCA Process

### *Community Tour Update – Jen Smith*

Jen Smith and Lindsay travelled to Inuvik and Aklavik in early February to present to:

- PCMB
- Inuvik HTC and CC, and elders
- Aklavik HTC and CC, and elders

Due to weather, they were not able to travel to Tuktoyaktuk.

Lindsay met with Duane Smith, IRC Chair, while in Inuvik, and Minister Frost the following week in Whitehorse.

When Lindsay presented to PCMB, they did not have questions. The Board intends to send a letter of support for the EYNS proposed designation. There were lots of questions at the Inuvik meeting, which helped clarify the narrative that this initiative has arisen out of the conflict between 12.(2) and 12.(3) in the IFA. Aklavik didn't have as many questions. Inuvik wanted information on how the different organizations would be kept updated as the process moves forward.

There is some interest in the EYNS for mineral opportunities, but the general message from Aklavik was 'full protection' of the area, meaning no oil and gas or extractive activities. This message came from Inuvik, as well. Inuvik recognized that Aklavik residents are the primary land users on the Yukon North Slope.

Parks Canada has heard from Aklavik for years that they want an office in Aklavik. In the context of the IPCA discussion, maybe we could capitalize on that in terms of having a 'park office' in Aklavik for the IPCA with year-round or seasonal employment (e.g. park officers, administration, etc.).

Some Inuvialuit are wondering what the monetary implications are for conservation designation: why 'lock up' a large area of land to the exclusion of other economic opportunities?

The Canada Nature Fund is a finite opportunity to obtain funding to continue already ongoing conversations – more so, it's the opportunity to move conversation and maybe establish a trust (and the trust money would be separate from the Canada Nature Fund monies for developing an Establishment Agreement).

#### *Nature Fund Proposal – Kaitlin Wilson*

Staff have been working on a proposal for the Canada Nature Fund: Challenge Component. The deadline for the application is March 29<sup>th</sup>. Part of the application is letters of support from partners. Letters of support have been secured from IHTC, AHTC, ACC, and a letter is expected from PCMB. YG has indicated that they would not provide a letter of support until they see a response from IRC.

Lindsay has been speaking to US Foundations about the possibility of an Establishment Fund, which would provide stable, long-term funding to administer an IPCA. There is some interest.

Yukon would still like to see a legislated designation in the EYNS (or at least an indication that this route is being considered), regardless of the Nature Fund application. If desired, WMAC NS can engage John Donihee to research how a Habitat Protected Area designation might layer in to the bigger picture of management on the EYNS. A key question might be how does the Special Management Area designation, which is from the UFA, translate under the IFA.

- Can an HPA satisfy the IFA requirements for conservation on the EYNS, while respecting the existing Withdrawal Order?
- What's the standing of the WCMP given a YG regulation? Does a YG regulation give it more legal standing? An HPA gives the ability to create regulations that can provide enforcement power. The regulations would be drawn from the key components of the WCMP. But not all HPAs have an enforcement component.
- The designation is the promise to talk about how you will manage an area -> the WCMP achieves this, then the regulations give the plan teeth
- **For the YNS, the value-added would be if WMAC NS, or some other body, wanted binding provisions in place, stemming from the WCMP**

The issue of which activities are allowed under the current Withdrawal Order was raised. Certain activities, such as dogsled tourism, can occur on the EYNS, provided they go through the appropriate screening process. Placer mining would not be allowed.

Summary: the IPCA is the framework for managing values; the would HPA provide a legal designation and the ability to regulate activity in the area. The Withdrawal Order would be maintained.

Other Yukon tools exist, such as Settlement Agreement Parks. *Parks Land Certainty Act, Wildlife Act, Environment Act.*

**Action 2019-02-08: Staff to engage John Donihee to perform legal research on how a Yukon Government Habitat Protected Area could be applied in the ISR.**

### ***Inuvialuit Naming Contest – Danny C. Gordon***

The idea is to have a contest in Aklavik to provide an Inuvialuk name to the EYNS (the land east of the Babbage, to the Big Fish River). This would strengthen the Inuvialuit identity and cultural attachment to the EYNS. Ivvavik Park was a great name – calving ground. Want the name to be meaningful. This is an Aklavik HTC initiative and the HTC can judge the best name. People might ask if the contest would have a prize.

## **I. Member Update – Part 1**

Dave Tavares led the Canada update, providing an overview of the Parks Canada Western Field Arctic projects planned for 2019-20. There is a detailed report in the meeting package covering the 2018-19 projects.

### **Grizzly Bear Occupancy**

- This field season will be the last required to complete the project
- Preliminary results show the likelihood of detecting a bear in the three different habitats throughout the survey period (April to October)

- Parks Canada is working toward establishing a threshold for when predicted occupancy indicates a statistically significant population decline (with 82% power); five years of data are needed to establish this threshold. This new method provides a potential noninvasive way to monitor the grizzly bear population in the Park.

#### Avian Diversity and Abundance

- There are some limitations to the study, but so far at the two plots, the trend is a decline in songbird abundance and diversity – but it’s important not to take these preliminary findings out of context
- The autonomous recording units, used first in 2018, are very effective for recording bird songs – 8 new species were first-time recorded in INP
  - o Some of the new recordings were of migrant or fly-over bird species
- PC may simply shift to an automated recording approach
- May partner with University of Columbia to install these recorders at each one of the camera sites; they will analyze the data

#### Coastal Erosion

- Have partnered with Alfred Wagner Institute for shoreline projections
- Predicting that by 2100, over 50% of cultural sites will have eroded
- Partnering with Aklavik to work on managing these cultural sites (culture camps, document the sites, etc.)

## Thursday, February 28, 2019

Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre, Whitehorse, YT

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### J. Report from Staff

Jen Smith attended the PCMB traditional knowledge study meeting with Trailmark on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was to talk about where things are at. The project focus has shifted from a TK study to a data mobilization project. Communities want to know how the information that’s already been captured in studies can be used. Trailmark is focused on data mobilization and helping TK and map data from different Indigenous groups and/or studies talk to each other. The next steps are requesting data, once data

sharing agreements are established. The first product would be a map of all the existing data across the range of the PCH. It's unsure how the funding will look going forward – there will likely be another funding request forthcoming.

## **K. Discussion Items**

### EISC Screening on the Yukon North Slope

EISC has not formally consulted the WMACs on this new approach to pre-screening research. The two legal opinions are in conflict (one from the EISC and one from WMAC NS). Lindsay will update IGC next week on the issue.

Dave had a deeper look into the IFA and the EISC's screening guidelines and noted some discrepancies in terms of how they align with the EISC's announcement about pre-screening:

- There is no mention in the IFA of pre-screening requirement
- All development proposals shall be screened "except government wildlife enhancement projects" (IFA)
- No screening or review is required in relation to a proposed development on an exclusion list
- Screening guidelines have a definition of wildlife enhancement projects (quite broad)
- According to the screening guidelines, government sponsored wildlife research is exempt from screening

The EISC is in the process of reviewing and updating the screening exclusion list.

**Action 2019-02-09 Dave will draft a response letter on behalf of the Council regarding WMAC's interpretation of the screening guidelines and IFA clauses. Staff will circulate the letter to the EISC and others.**

### Update from AWI/Hugues Lantuit

Hugues provided an update on his research program on Herschel Island.

#### **Coastal Erosion**

- Map of all of Yukon North Slope coastline indicating level of erosion or accumulation
- Many cultural features have a high probability of being lost to the sea in the next 80 years
- Shingle Point – erosion may not be the threat, but storm surges are a bigger concern
- Does the Council have any specific requests about how this information/mapping is presented and disseminated?

## **Slumps**

- Releasing considerable amounts of sediment into the ocean
- Areas (east of Herschel) that were previously covered by glaciers are much more vulnerable to slumping, due to the material deposited during glaciation

## **Small Creeks**

- Creeks are very efficient at moving sediment to the sea
- Movement of sediment is linked to rainfall

## **Snow + Permafrost**

- Camera traps photographing snow coverage at the same locations across years
- Permafrost sensors at multiple locations, at multiple depths

## **Coastal Waters**

- Nearshore seafloor mapping
- Sediment in front of slumps is more diverse
- Hot spots for total organic carbon (including Pauline Cove), indicating higher productivity
- Bivalves, sediment cores etc. as indicators of productivity

<http://bit.do/northslope> (north slope related resources)

## Future Activities:

Fieldwork in spring/summer 2019

Vulnerability study at Shingle Point

Coordination of coastal activities with AHTC + DFO

New focus on primary productivity and fish through partnerships

Mitigation of coastal erosion – we have lots of data now, but what can we do? Many mitigations would be very costly, so there would need to be some decisions to save, protect, or document camps and other cultural resources

Funding – French government funding (stable) to 2022.

3D model of Shingle Point? (idea from discussion with AHTC)

## TeamSHRUB/Isla Myers-Smith

Isla provided an update on her research program on Herschel Island.

Big questions right now: What is changing the plant in the system and what are the effects of these changes?

- Ecological monitoring program started in 1999.

- Have now added time-lapse cameras to sites
- Plants are greening up earlier in the year (by about 8 days), in the past 18 years
- BUT, no change in the length of the growth period (plants are not growing for longer).
- Snowmelt had the strongest relationship with earlier green-up
- Many wetter areas are showing more and higher shrub growth, more plants and less bare ground
- Active layer is increasing, 20 cm over 20 years (this has implications for plant roots and access to water and nutrients)
- This system and types of change are complicated
- Four summers of drone research (including for Pauline Cove area)

Future work could include linking vegetation change to wildlife changes (e.g. moose/caribou and shrubs replacing lichens).

Parks Canada is also updating subtle vegetation change measurement and moose survey – room for coordination of research and results.

Drone video is public (although sharing large files is tricky).

#### Richard Gordon and Carrie Mierau – Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk Park Monitoring

AWI, Team Shrub, and Cameron Eckert have programs planned on Herschel in 2019.

A council member asked how the competing demands for space on Herschel are managed?

- Coordinate between AHTC, Heritage, Yukon Parks
- Work with researchers if there is conflict
- Considerations: use of facilities, water, wood
  - This spring AWI will help with camp-opening activities

Some Aklavik Elders have been sharing stories from the past about Herschel. It would be good to record these stories, as this is the last generation of people can remember the old stories.

YG is working on heritage planning – close to finalizing plans. There is a desire to submit the Plan to cabinet soon, so that the heritage plan can inform risk management and valuing of heritage resources.

Does YG have a plan to have that conversation (about risk and values) with Inuvialuit, in terms of making those decisions around heritage and cultural values?

- YG hasn't yet planned out how to package the story about risk and values (a risk plan or multi group discussion). Maybe a workshop this time next year with

WMAC NS.

Parks Canada have partnered with Mike O'Rourke at the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre on this type of initiative. Mike is taking cultural and historic site information and creating a platform for consultation and discussion. This is being piloted for Clarence Lagoon.

The Yukon's IFA implementation funding is being stretched thin. Yukon is struggling to meet the IFA mandate as it pertains to Herschel. A funding increase is not expected. In past years, Yukon has received supplementary funding but this has ceased. The issue could be brought forward to the IFA-ICC level. Stephanie has been working to allocate the IFA implementation funding between the Yukon's different IFA implementation priorities. Herschel has received a small increase but that money is insufficient. EIRB and EISC have been more active in recent years so some funding has gone to those Boards. There could be a letter written by YG, GNWT and IRC pertaining to IFA implementation funding. This could kickstart some political movement on the issue.

YG is starting to open up conversations with the Aklavik Community Corporation around cruise ship activity. Location, cultural hosts, etc.

So far, there is one cruise ship planned for 2019 summer, but YG won't know the final number until the end of June.

Last year, weather conditions caused the cruise ships to cancel. There was packed ice all summer. The ice retreated a little west of Herschel and then stopped. It was unnavigable.

Mike Suitor will be conducting a polar bear survey this spring over Herschel and his group may also help with season opening activities.

The West Side working group is meeting next week in Aklavik to talk about char.

**Action 2019-02-10 WMAC staff will link mapping and change data from Yukon North Slope researchers with WMCP writing and mapping.**

#### Elie Gurarie – PCH Habitat Modeling

Elie Gurarie has been analyzing the PCH collar data, combining that with habitat information to understand PCH habitat use on the YNS in different seasons. PCH show two distinct peaks in terms of their use of the YNS – the first is when they migrate through the YNS in the spring (May to early June) en route to their calving grounds, and the second is in the mid-summer (late July to August) when they are foraging on the YNS. Elie looked at habitat variables, including elevation, NDVI (normalized deviated vegetation index, a satellite measure of 'greenness') and the Ecological Land

Classification that YG produced for the YNS. Elie ran an analysis called a 'resource selection function' which compares the habitat that the PCH use, or select, with the unused, or available. The PCH have almost opposite preferences for habitat in the spring versus the summer. Caribou have a strong selection for Ivavik Park in the spring and the Southeastern Yukon North Slope in the summer. In the future, this resource selection function could be built upon to project impacts from proposed development or different land uses. It was noted that for the entirety of Elie's PCH collar dataset, the herd calved in Alaska. In 2018, the PCH calved on the YNS in Ivavik, so it would be interesting to re-run the model including 2018's data. It would be useful to re-run the model with different resolution of ELC data (Elie coarsened the ELC data from 6x6m to 60x60m) as a type of model verification.

#### Arctic Borderlands (Heather Ashthorn)

Heather provided an update on the main activities of ABEKS currently:

- Coordinating local ecological monitoring across the Porcupine Caribou range
- Youth monitoring and mentoring (2 seasons worth) is now underway
- DataPath Systems is the current host for the database
- Coordinating access

Future Administration:

- Discussion about governance structure (non-profit vs. new model), more admin involvement from communities, merging with existing programs, etc. – i.e. if the current model is outdated, what model should we be shifting to or embedding in?
- Looking for more participation from all stakeholders to shape the program's future
- Time for an assessment of the methods (currently quite simple approach), time to shift to a tech-based approach (?)
- Joint Secretariat has proposed nesting in the existing Inuvialuit structure (GTC could have a similar role for the Gwich'in)
- Data access is a big question – can there be access for some parties outside of the review process? Or shift all data to in-house (i.e. JS)?
- Community Report was presented by community this year and has been well-received
- Strength is in the qualitative responses

Linkages to other monitoring programs are underway.

#### CBC Filming Request

- AHTC has written a letter of support, conditional on not disturbing Inuvialuit using the land in the proposed area
- Are there any concerns from the regional biologist?

**Action 2019-02-11 WMAC staff to follow up with Aklavik HTC and the Regional Biologist regarding community support for the CBC Porcupine caribou filming proposal**

**I. Member Updates – Part 2**

Laurence Carter - muskox

Laurence is a Master's student at McGill studying under Murray Humphries. She has been working with the Council since 2017.

Laurence's objectives are:

- Determine impact of muskox grazing on vegetation composition and biomass
- Describe muskox habitat selection
- Characterize interactions between muskox and caribou using results from those first two objectives

Concerns from Aklavik about muskox and caribou seem to point to either competing via herbivory or competing via habitat selection.

Last summer Laurence led field work on the YNS. Some was based out of Sheep Creek and some in the Richardsons. This work was aimed at Laurence's first objective. Lots of people got out in the field. They sampled 211 20x20m plots, looking at vegetation cover and species height. All sites were selected according to muskox use characteristics (high or low presence) So far, Laurence has preliminary results which show a difference in site characteristics for used sites.

Laurence plans to go back into the field in 2019 to do similar work. Hoping to continue to work with Aklavik on muskox research. Challenges are lack of experience with community engagement and length of a master's degree. Will work with WMAC NS staff and Mike Suitor on how to continue to engage Aklavik once Laurence is finished her master's.

The Council had some questions for Laurence:

Are the muskox scattered across the landscape in groups of 2-3?

- They hang out in groups, bigger than 2-3, maybe around 12 per group. There is large variability in muskox herd size

Is there a plan to tie into competition between caribou and muskox?

- It's hard to elucidate competition in a definitive way. One method to get at it is by comparing resource selection function models for muskox and caribou presence, use muskox presence in a caribou model and vice versa; another method is to do a grazing study to look at if muskox are reducing food quality for

## caribou

One Council member noted that there has been some paleontological work on isotopic composition of muskox and caribou out of Alaska showing the dietary changes in both. There are times when caribou and muskox co-occurred in the past. There is similar work on Banks Island too.

So far, is there no qualification to say that muskox and caribou don't get along?

- Laurence has not assumed that muskox and caribou don't get along, but she plans to investigate the question as part of her research.

It was noted that, based on Laurence's field work photos, lots of people from Aklavik and other regional organizations were working together last summer to answer the question about muskox and caribou that Aklavik posed – this is a big sign of success.

### Mike Suitor

Mike provided a verbal update over the phone. The next field program is starting up in a week or so. One of the major efforts this year was the database for PCH data. The database work will carry into the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Two other projects:

- Dr. Trevor Lantz (UVic) has a student, Jordan, doing some work on vegetation greening and browning, the drivers behind that change and predicting where this will occur on the landscape; he will collaborate with Laurence
- Katie Orndall (Arizona U under Dr. Scott Gaetz) is doing drone vegetation mapping – can you estimate the amount of biomass at the regional scale (e.g. how much shrub, lichen, grasses/sedges); Mike will try to help her piggyback on other projects, get her in the field and producing useful data for us

### Tyler Kuhn, Yukon Government

Wetlands Policy Development

- This will be an operational policy not tied to any specific legislation.
- No binding commitments, but clarity and direction, especially for assessment of activities, not sector specific.
- Fourth roundtable meeting in March 2019
- Smaller drafting group is working on content
- No specific areas will be identified
- Development hierarchy is under discussion
- Consider a reference in the updated WCMP (Other Plans and Policies, identification of special wetlands on the Yukon North Slope, etc.)

Tyler will continue to provide updates, WMAC staff will engage more meaningfully once there is a draft for review.

## **L. Staff Updates**

Muskox Research Plan: Allison provided a short update on the status of review of the Plan; most comments have been received.

**Action 2019-02-12 WMAC Staff will circulate a PDF of the penultimate draft the of muskox research plan to the Council – final version to be posted to the WMAC NS website**

Kaitlin provided an update on work with the Shared Services Unit (SSU) staff at the Joint Secretariat (Cassandra Elliott, TK Coordinator, and Chloe Brogan, CBMP Coordinator). The SSU staff wrote to the Boards looking for input into their workplans in 2019-20. The SSU staff are interested in how they can assist other Boards with their work and develop a closer relationship to the Boards. The Council noted that, with the drafting of the WCMP, the Council is at capacity, but there is value in exploring ways to work with the SSU staff in the future. WMAC NS staff can reach out to the SSU staff to thank them for their offer, and conveying the Council's feedback.

**Action 2019-02-13 WMAC Staff write to the SSU staff conveying the Council's feedback on their offer.**

## **M. Upcoming meetings**

**April 16 & 17 (tentative): special meeting of Council in Whitehorse**

- Focus on mapping
- Invite Kim and Joan
- Expected outcomes:
  - Maps for the plan and maps for the atlas
    - Are we comfortable with the maps so far?
    - How do we want to use them to inform the management plan?
    - How can we put these into a form that will allow us to meet needs in the future and allow us to visualize information in different ways
  - Stacked maps exercise (similar to Nov 6 Aklavik meeting) – informing theme D
  - Clear idea of plan content, who is writing which pieces

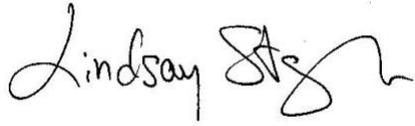
**June 4-6: Quarterly meeting (focus on the WCMP), in Whitehorse, before IGC**

- 3 days: 2 reviewing draft, 1 regular business
- Joan to attend in person
- Complete draft as outcome of this meeting

**September 17-19 (tentative): Quarterly meeting in Whitehorse**

- Check with the government alternates to see if they can attend; both government members are on vacation in September

**Adjourned at 4:20 PM Moved by Ernest Pokiak, seconded by Tyler Kuhn.**



July 14, 2020

Date

Lindsay Staples, WMAC (North Slope)  
Chair



July 14, 2020

Date

Allison Thompson, Staff