



WMAC NS Regular Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2021

Attendees: Evelyn Storr (IGC Alternate Member), Michelle Gruben (IGC Alternate Member), Allison Thompson (WMAC Staff), Kaitlin Wilson (WMAC Staff), William Storr (Alternate WMAC Chair), Tyler Kuhn (YG Member), Matt Clarke (YG Alternate), Craig Machtans (Canada Alternate), Colleen Arnison (Canada Member), Lindsay Staples (WMAC Contractor), Mike Sutor (YG Biologist), Heather Johnson, Chanda Turner (Contractor)

Meeting called to order at 9:05am.

Introductions

The staff led a round of introductions, including our new admin contractor Johanna, introducing Billy in his role as alternate Chair, and introducing our new Canada member Colleen Arnison.

1. Agenda

Kait provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Motion 2021-04-01 to approve the agenda as tabled. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Colleen Arnison.

2. Meeting Minutes

The Council reviewed the minutes from the March 2021 telemeetings (March 18 finance meeting and March 29th regular meeting).

Craig thought the minutes were good.

Motion 2021-04-02 to approve the March 18, 2021 meeting minutes. Moved by Evelyn Storr, seconded by Matt Clarke.

Motion 2021-04-03 to approve the March 29, 2021 meeting minutes. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Michelle Gruben.

3. Action items

Kait provided an overview of the Council's action items.

The action items regarding transition to an alternate Chair are complete. There was an action item about working with Michelle to set up a part time contract in Aklavik, which will be put off until a new Chair is appointed.



We are currently working with the Joint Secretariat to stay in step with how they are approaching Inuvialuit Participation payments. Allison will be reaching out in the coming weeks to Inuvialuit members to discuss a draft WMAC (NS) Inuvialuit member payment policy.

Kait reminded the staff that, to keep the meeting moving along efficiently, we are not revisiting all older action items. If a member wants to provide an update on an older action item, they can let staff know beforehand, so we can carve out time during the meeting.

4. Discussion items

IPCA and WCMP next steps

The Yukon election put a lot of this work on hold. While there has been an election, Yukon does not yet have a mandate to engage on the IPCA file.

The WCMP was advanced from WMAC NS to Yukon government before Christmas, with the request for WMAC to facilitate the public engagement, and that Cabinet proceed to approval following public engagement, notwithstanding any major revisions.

Tyler: There isn't much additional information, but things are starting to move with the political announcement of the Confidence and Supply agreement between the Liberals and NDP. When or how things will move forward remain uncertain. The Chair appointment and the WCMP were both added to the priority briefing list for when the new government is formed. But, with a change in government, Yukon staff will need to develop new briefing materials. There will also need to be special briefings for the new Minister or Environment.

There was an Inuvialuit caucus (IRC, AHTC, ACC, Aklavik Elders) meeting two weeks ago about the Trust for the Aullaviat/Aunguniarvik conservation area. One of the outcomes was for IRC to have a follow up meeting with Aklavik representatives to discuss the priorities for the application of the trust fund and the model used. This follow-up meeting has yet to occur.

Lindsay: It's important that the conservation area budget and activities are directed by Inuvialuit values and priorities. IRC already has a trust structure in place, which could be used as a mechanism to administer the conservation area trust. With the right agreements in place, conservation trust money can be kept separate from the larger IRC pot.

There is a concern that this process will start to lose momentum. Canada still hopes to hit the September 2021 target for a signed Establishment Agreement. There is a rolling draft of an agreement that Parties have been commenting on, so some work is still happening. Canada and Inuvialuit have legal counsel appointed to this file, Yukon does not, as yet.

As for the WCMP, the next step is public engagement. Yukon has had the Plan since December 2020. It did not make it to cabinet before their election was called. Prior to the election, Council



discussed the potential of proceeding with public engagement without formal Yukon approval (if Yukon was unable to support the process in timely manner). The status of the WCMP is critical to the IPCA process - it needs to be in place to support the agreement.

The question is: would Council like to proceed with the public engagement process, while still meeting the same standard that Yukon would expect? Should we wait 30 days as a courtesy?

Evelyn: we have to be mindful about public engagement in a covid world. It's more difficult.

Lindsay: The concept for engagement was that it would be posted to the WMAC (NS) website and notices would be sent out through various media channels.

Craig: There is a lot of uncertainty in the government establishment process. Suggest moving forward with public engagement. This can dovetail with the new briefing materials that staff will provide Yukon government.

Evelyn: Have all the groups and communities in the ISR been engaged properly?

Lindsay: There has been significant outreach and engagement on the WCMP with Inuvialuit organizations and other stakeholders over the past two years.

Action Item 2021-04-01 Staff to provide a summary BN for Evelyn of engagement to date and plan moving forward for public engagement

Allison: A note to Council that Kirsten Madsen has completed a copy edit of the WCMP. This final draft with tracked copy edits is in the meeting folder. Council can have a look, but they are not obliged.

Colleen: What is the risk of Council running its own public engagement? Would Yukon want to redo it?

Lindsay: There is some political risk. We are making a calculated risk to proceed with public engagement. We will aim to satisfy the public need to engage with this Plan. There is past precedent for an independent group undertaking public engagement on a Plan that Yukon is a signatory to.

Matt: It is a feasible option. There is some risk that Yukon would be unsatisfied with the process/outcome. Given the context of the plan, the remoteness of the locale, and the limited interest/awareness of the YNS, the risk is lower.

Tyler: There is another risk to consider: by going out to the public, the Minister won't see it before others (e.g. mining groups) and there could be some negative feedback to a new Minister that is not yet briefed. Risk of YG wanting to redo engagement is low though. It would be important for



YG to see some kind of What We Heard document. From an official capacity, the YG rep cannot support this process on record, but as long as there was consensus (with Yukon abstaining) we could proceed.

Lindsay: A motion to proceed with Yukon abstaining is a way to proceed.

Action item 2021-04-02 Staff to provide a briefing note on the engagement process for council to consider.

Evelyn: At this time, not in support moving forward with public engagement without the Yukon Minister in place and briefed.

Lindsay: Now that we know the outcome of the Yukon election, the risk is lower. Still not a risk free decision, but the risk may be acceptably low now.

Tyler: Don't think we will have Yukon cabinet direction in 30 days. It will likely take a couple months for the Yukon backlog to move through the cabinet. Conservatively, looking at 60-90 days.

Billy: Sees the pros and cons to moving ahead and waiting. Government has had this file for a while. Would like the new government to be informed. It's always better for the government to be informed before next steps are taken. I would like to see this get done, but would like to see it move forward in a fashion where we are not leaving the government out.

Lindsay: We have letters of support from IRC, IGC and HTC(s) to move to public engagement. This might provide some comfort on moving to public engagement.

Evelyn: Agree, but need to review the background materials.

Consider revisiting in a special teleconference, once Evelyn has had the opportunity to review the briefing note.

Billy: The sooner the better. Teleconference next week if possible.

Craig: Canada's Minister has been patiently waiting for Yukon to review and approve this Plan, so they can count the EYNS as part of Canada's conservation quantum. Our Minister has been engaging with the Yukon Ministers asking what the holdup is. I will advise my Minister of the latest developments and request that they move this file along.

The plan addresses near and offshore waters, which implicates the GNWT. WMAC NWT and GNWT representatives have reviewed the plan, but we need to consider their sign off processes.



Action item 2021-04-03 Staff will organize a special meeting in a week's time to discuss WCMP engagement.

Action item 2021-04-04 Staff will reach out to GNWT about signoff on the WCMP.

The idea of reaching out to the NDP caucus to brief them was raised, but given the Liberal-NDP agreement, it doesn't make sense.

Chair Honoraria and Payment

Billy declared a conflict of interest and stepped away and Tyler stepped in to "Chair" the discussion.

Kait provided an overview of the Chair honoraria and payment briefing note.

Day Rate for Chairperson: our current Chair rate is \$350/day. In April 2020, WMAC (NS) raised the Inuvialuit member honoraria rate to \$350/day. Typically, we have a slightly higher Chair rate to reflect the additional duties of the position. WMAC NS does have room in their budget for a Chair honoraria increase (which is \$70,000).

Staff are also looking at ways to support Billy in his role as alternate Chair, recognizing that he may be in this role for a few months.

Pay structure for Chairperson: The Chair position is a part-time position and our Chairs have other responsibilities throughout the day. There are a lot of emails to respond to, and the current alternate Chair responds to them as they come in, rather than carving out a dedicated space; this works better with their other responsibilities. Staff are suggesting a stipend-type approach to providing honoraria for the Chairperson, to support their ability to engage on emails, phone calls, and document review throughout each month. The stipend model is used elsewhere in the ISR, and typically ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month.

Lindsay provided some policy background. The numbers we've used were set in Treasury Board guidelines from the 1980s. Honoraria rates have been a concern for Boards across the north. The Federal government, a few years ago, initiated a review of honoraria rates for Boards north of 60. This review, we understand, was completed but never enacted nor the results shared. WMAC (NWT) has done some work on this front, and it was decided that it was their prerogative to raise their honoraria rates, as long as they could financially support it. The rate proposed today is in line with other ISR Boards. And the proposed increase to \$500/day for the Chair is still within the Council's means.

Craig: How long have the other boards been at \$500/day?

Lindsay: Several years for the EISC and EIRB and four years for the WMAC (NWT).



Tyler: Is it two separate models? \$350 or \$500 per day OR a stipend?

Kait: Clarified that it is a combination of the two. A day rate for meetings, with an additional stipend to cover the bits and pieces (ie, email responses, short phone calls).

Lindsay: With a new Chair, Council may want to revisit the payment structure.

Michelle: Supports the stipend for the acting Chair. We know the budget for the Chair is \$70,000 per year. We want to make sure we are within the budget. Is the number we are agreeing to, \$1,500-2,000 per month? Do we use this number?

Kait: Billy selected that range based on other Chair stipends. We do have room under the budget to allow for the stipend plus honoraria for Billy's other meeting commitments.

Motion 2021-04-04 to raise the WMAC NS Chair honoraria rate to \$500/day and also pay the acting Chair a monthly stipend of \$1,500/month as recommended, to be reviewed when a new Chair is appointed. This will be retroactive to April 1, 2021. Moved by Evelyn Storr, seconded by Colleen Arnison.

Caribou calving/post-calving habitat and climate change research and polar bear survey update (Mike Sutor)

Mike shared his screen for the presentation (no binder materials).

Mike has been collaborating with United States Geological Service, specifically Heather Johnson, to investigate the impact of spring phenology on the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Phenology refers to snow melt and green-up. Greenup is happening earlier in the year over time on the Yukon North Slope. What's going to happen to the Porcupine Herd as spring green up happens earlier? Will they continue to use the 1002 lands (calving grounds) in the same way? Can we predict where the caribou will calve using fancy models? Peak calving has shifted to be earlier in the last ten years.

For this study, the team looked at a bunch of different habitat components: vegetation cover, terrain type, distance from the coast, and phenology (using satellite imagery indicators for snowmelt and greenness).

They looked at the variables from multiple scales – from a few metres squared, 500m², 1km², 2km², 5km² and 10km². This helps the researchers get at what scale caribou are making movement decisions on (from individual plant scale up to landscape scale). It seems like caribou are choosing on a larger scale, looking for green vegetation. But the immediate surroundings matter too.

Craig: Why is low shrub so important at the 10km scale?



Mike: This probably breaks up the landscape and gives them some forage. They eat a tiny bit of a tiny shrub. This food is important moving into post-calving. The phenology variables are important and give us insight into climate effects.

Caribou are making choices. They want to have no snow when they have their calf. They usually calve right at the edge of the snowline. For post-calving, caribou are situating themselves in the greener vegetation that's out there.

Fast forward to the results! Based on the information we collected, we built a model to predict where calving grounds would be each year (2012-2018) (because we know where calving actually occurred, so we can see how well the model did). The predictions were really good, very close to what actually happened. We had early and late phenology years, and the model did well with both ends of the spectrum. The post-calving models did well too. The next step is to vary the phenology based on different climate change projections to try to predict where the herd will calve and post-calve in the future. It looks like calving will move further west. Earlier springs will result in less use of Yukon for calving. Overall, we think there will be more calving habitat available to PCH in the future. Post-calving is also expected to shift westward (especially into the 1002 lands), and we are expecting almost no use of the YNS for post-calving in the future (shift into Alaska). Overall, we are predicting a loss of post-calving habitat, so what is available will become more important.

Snowmelt was the most important predictor of calving, and greenness is the most important predictor of post-calving. Caribou tend to select habitat at landscape scales (5-10kms) - this makes sense because they are a herding species.

Climate predictions are really complex. In this model, the researchers couldn't account for expansion of woody plant species, permafrost impacts, and changes in the insect season.

This study underlines that to protect the herd, we need to be thinking about landscape-scale conservation.

Craig: there was an internal Canada proposal about planning for range shifts. Is there a link between that and Mike's work?

Colleen: this is leading into the next step of the project that Mike's looking at. This would utilize internal funding to support the USGS-led work.

WMAC NS wildlife project funding has supported this work over the past couple of years, too.

Stephanie: Is this a project that we may want to commit additional IFA funding to?



Mike: Not at this time. Mike has another proposal in the works, with the Canadian Mountain Network.

Grizzly Bear Management Planning in the ISR (Chanda Turner)

Chanda is on contract with WMAC (NWT) to lead grizzly bear planning at the ISR and federal levels. There is a Powerpoint presentation and briefing note available in the meeting Dropbox.

Chanda shared a timeline for the development of the ISR plan. The meeting summary from the communities will be available to WMAC NS shortly and there will be a draft plan presented to Council in the summer. Council will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback by the end of the summer.

Some observations from the Aklavik community meeting:

- Grizzly bears are not at risk in the ISR
- People are seeing lots of small bears
- Grizzly bear range is expanding
- The market has changed for grizzly bear hides has changed significantly
- Bears being sighted in the community
- The tag system works well and is understood, male female ratio is being met
- There's concern about collared/handled bears being more aggressive

Michelle: there is some concern about when the Yukon tags expire (end of March). Some harvesters have noted that this doesn't work as this is in the middle of harvest season.

Some feedback from the Aklavik community meeting:

- People want more information on population (YNS has the best data).
- Work with neighbours and local people
- A survey should use non-invasive methods + engage land users
- Survey must include the Mackenzie delta
- The survey would need to distinguish between big and small bears
- Ongoing management of bears in the community is required
- People would rather bears weren't killed at the landfill/in community
- More info on bear movement (where are they coming from? Where do they go after the community visit or after relocation)
- There is more information that could be captured when harvesters return a tag
- Use Defense of Life and Property kills as an education tool
- Recommend removal of zones in ISR (there is a perception that people in Inuvik are not able to access tags for the YNS, this creates tension among communities and Inuvialuit should be able to harvest throughout their territory)
- Harvest data sharing with Gwich'in



Michelle noted that gas prices are limiting harvesters from accessing bigger bears in the western North Slope region. So it's not that there aren't big bears, but that people can't necessarily access them.

Billy: the economy is different between Inuvik and Aklavik. Suggest having a look at previous IGC minutes re grizzly bear management.

Chanda: addressing management issues and recommendations at the community level will be an important aspect of this plan.

Tyler: How will Yukon be engaged?

Plan will be signed off by the Councils, but there will be communication with governments. It's still unclear how that feedback will be included.

Tyler: YG can feed information through WMAC NS. Focus will be on YNS/Aklavik region.

Action item 2021-04-05 staff to follow up with Council members and Chanda to address feedback questions re ISR grizzly bear management plan update.

Chanda gave a brief update on the federal grizzly bear Management Plan drafting. Council will follow up with her with any questions or comments.

Lindsay Staples Contract

Kait presented the draft contract with Lindsay Staples. Staff will remove Billy Storr's name from the contract, and replace it with "Alternate Chair"

Motion 2021-04-05 to approve the draft contract with Lindsay Staples. Moved by Evelyn Storr, seconded by Michelle Gruben.

The Council will discuss Society Status at its next opportunity. This is an urgent item.

Motion 2021-04-06 to conclude the meeting. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Colleen Arnison.