

## WMAC NS Teleconference

### October 28, 2020

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**Attendees:** Dave Tavares (Parks Canada), Billy Storr (IGC Representative), Billy Archie (IGC Representative), Kaitlin Wilson (WMAC NS staff), Allison Thompson (WMAC NS staff), Lindsay Staples (WMAC NS Chair), Michelle Gruben (IGC Alternate), Matt Clarke (Yukon Government Alternate), Tyler Kuhn (Yukon Government member), Mike Suitor (Yukon Government technical support)

The meeting was called to order at 1:05pm. Tyler is leaving at 1:45pm.

#### **Agenda:**

Lindsay provided an overview of the day's agenda.

Kait let the Council know about a survey that IRC shared about their cruise ship management plan and associated survey. She will inform the Council about this in staff updates. Mike has an update on external funding to share with the Council under member updates.

Billy Archie suggested a discussion about applying some of the WMAC budget to hire field workers in Aklavik to provide updates to folks there about the WCMP and IPCA initiative.

**Motion 2020-10-01** to accept the agenda as amended. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Billy Storr.

#### **Minutes:**

**Motion 2020-10-02** to accept the September 2020 joint WMACs minutes as tabled. Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Billy Archie.

**Motion 2020-10-03** to accept the September 2020 WMAC NS telemeeting minutes as tabled. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Dave Tavares.

**Motion 2020-10-04** to accept the October 26, 2020 WMAC NS WCMP telemeeting minutes as tabled. Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Billy Storr.

#### **Action Items:**

There was only one action item coming out of the Council's September teleconference. The current focus for work is on revising the WCMP and recommending for public engagement.

Matt – Action Item 2020-08-03 can be retired now.

#### **Correspondences:**

Lindsay noted the IGC and AHTC's recent letter to IRC concerning the WCMP and IPCA initiatives as an important correspondence, which may have helped foster a positive discussion between Lindsay, John Donihee and IRC (Evan Pound) last week.

#### Species at Risk correspondence:

*Hudsonian Godwit*

WMAC NS has been requested to provide feedback on proposed SARA listing of Hudsonian Godwit as Threatened. A Threatened listing, legally, would mean a Recovery Strategy would be developed and critical habitat would be identified.

Tyler: YG is drafting a response to these SARA proposals as well. YG is in support of the Hudsonian Godwit listing.

Dave: when you identify critical habitat, you identify factors that would affect the critical habitat, which would inform the 'protection' or conservation of that critical habitat. ECCC sent a team to the YNS to do a survey for the species and there was one positive identification but it was just east of the Yukon border, in the NWT. There is very little information about the Hudsonian Godwit on the YNS. The summer breeding habitat in Canada and Alaska is restricted to some very tiny pockets.

Billy Archie: has WMAC NS identified any indicator species that we are monitoring for climate change impact?

Dave: there is an ecological integrity monitoring program in Ivvavik, which spans everything from songbird populations to land cover, to aquatic species like Dolly Varden. We have data on a variety of species, plants and animals, within the Park. Over time, when there are significant changes to those populations you can look at what is driving that change. All of these species are monitored to various degrees of frequency/intensity. Whenever there is a significant change in population, distribution, behaviour, etc. you can look at factors like climate change that might be driving that.

Mike Sutor: With respect to the Porcupine caribou herd (PCH) we are doing that work right now in cooperation with partners. Looking at climate change induced factors on the PCH and what that will mean down the road. We might identify key things to monitor to understand how the landscape is changing from a caribou lens.

Billy A: another indicator is grizzly bears - low harvest, smaller bears. Want to understand what may be leading to these observations.

#### *Red necked phalarope*

Was listed by special concern by COSEWIC. A draft management plan has been produced and ECCC is looking for support from WMAC NS to post this document on the SARA public registry for public comment.

Dave read the management plan this morning and couldn't think of any reasons not to support it. It is in line with the work the Council has been doing.

Billy Storr: when we are considering SARA engagement - the good thing is, once the species is listed there is an opportunity for funding to find out more about the species. So for conservation purposes, this is a good thing - especially since Inuvialuit harvest rights are not impacted.

**Action Item 2020-10-01** - Council will have two weeks to consider the draft plan for the red necked phalarope, before staff provide a response to ECCC.

**Action Item 2020-10-02** – Staff will respond to ECCC regarding the listing of the Hudsonian Godwit, noting the draft management plan for the region and existing conservation status on the YNS as it relates to critical habitat, as well as the importance of involvement in the eventual recovery strategy, including the role of Aklavik (monitoring, etc.)

*IRC Draft Climate Change Strategy*

IRC gave us a short turnaround on their draft strategy. Staff read through the draft strategy and generated high level and technical comments. The staff submitted those comments on behalf of staff only as Council did not have time to review. If the Council has additional feedback, there is likely still time to convey that to IRC.

Billy Archie suggested that WMAC NS corresponds with IGC about their involvement (and the rest of the JS's involvement) in this Plan. Staff are unsure if IGC ultimately submitted comments.

Billy Storr: IRC can't have had this come from nowhere - this strategy must have been in development for a while. But it seems like it comes out of nowhere and then there is a very short turnaround time for feedback.

Lindsay: Unfortunately, this has happened on multiple occasions - such as a seven-day notice on an ISR Research workshop led by IRC. We can share the staff-level response to the draft Strategy with both Aklavik and IGC and encourage them to engage. The WCMP contains climate change related recommendations, and IRC provided feedback suggesting to the effect that they be less onerous. The WCMP attempts to represent the interest of three parties to the IFA (Canada, Yukon and Inuvialuit). In Yukon, there is a climate strategy, too. The Council can communicate that through the WCMP that we are anticipating a climate strategy that is strongly informed by partner organizations and communities like Aklavik - that should be a big part of both the Strategy and its implementation.

**Action Item 2020-10-03** - Staff will follow up with IGC about their feedback on the development of the IRC Climate Change Strategy.

**Action Item 2020-10-04** – Staff will share the staff-level response to the IRC Climate Change Strategy with the AHTC, ACC and IGC.

**Finance Update:**

Allison provided a summary of the WMAC core budget and IPCA budget. There is also a briefing note summarizing the state of the budget in the meeting folder. These numbers represent the first six months of the fiscal year (April - September).

Our total revenue (current year plus carry forward from the previous year) for 2020-21 is \$717,935.

Generally, the Council is underspent, which was expected given the travel limitations this year and the influence of the Canada Nature Fund budget. Most line items in expected costs have been revised down. However, some costs in communications and legal/consulting have been revised up to reflect specific costs incurred on various projects.

The Canada Nature Fund budget continues to overlap with the Council's core budget, resulting in lower than normal expenditures in some line items (e.g. Chair honorarium).

As expected, Covid has meant Council spending is considerably less than what it normally would be.

In the Inuvialuit participation budget, the only expenditures have been in honoraria. The daily rate for Inuvialuit members has been increased to \$350/day and this has been reflected in the overall Inuvialuit participation budget, which is now over \$80k.

Some suggested additional ways the Council could consider modifying our budget:

- Polar bear integrated population modelling work (Steve Braund)
- PCH harvest focus groups (Jessica Norris)

The Council has \$543,000 remaining this year, with a potential rollover of over \$175,000 based on estimated expenditures.

A reminder that the Council is unable to extend our two-year Nature Fund project into a third year (no additional funding, but more time). The delay in receiving IRC comments on the Plan has resulted in a delay in the overall Plan process, which has budget implications. Thankfully, the Council is able continue this work in the next fiscal year. There have also been some additional costs associated with changes in the contractor for the development of the Companion Document, as well as the contracting of an editor for the Plan and Companion Document.

Expected carry forward to 2021-22 of \$50,000 for the Canada Nature Fund Budget.

Billy Storr suggested not using half-day payments for Inuvialuit members, as there is also time involved in preparing for a meeting.

Council did not have any concerns about shifting away from half day payments for meetings.

#### **Staff/Member/Chair Reports:**

##### Polar bear research

Allison provided a reminder of the population work proposed for the South and North Beaufort bears. This includes an integrated population model (science and Indigenous knowledge), with Steve Braund, Eric Regere, Andy (North Slope Borough).

Steve is also developing a proposal for some communications sci-comm on integrated population modeling for communities.

##### Companion Report

Billy: can Council members have a phone call to go over each chapter from the Companion Doc as they are drafted.

Allison will look into having RRCS conducting one-hour sessions on each chapter as they are drafted. The Council understands that this may cost some extra money. Allison will also look into having Kirsten join a future Council meeting to explain some of her more substantive edits to the Companion Doc, if the Council wants.

##### Kayla – Outreach Update

Working with Darcie on some visual art work to communicate some of the key ideas from the WCMP. It's a series of 8 stories that Kayla wrote + two quotes from the WMAC NS Traditional Use study. It bridges the distance between youth and Elders. It's also a tool to share that the WCMP is a document for Inuvialuit as well. Illustrations are complete and the story is written! Now we need to overlay the stories on to the images - should be done soon. It's been great working with Darcie.

Kayla has also been working on a "science chats" interview series, which shares recent YNS research that has involved community members. There are blog posts on each science chat, and a video shared on Facebook. The two types of content are also linked.

Kayla is still working on an "insects" page for the WMAC NS website. She is also preparing an annotated briefing note to support the inclusion of insects in the future WMAC NS research plan.

Billy Archie: it's great to strengthen communication between researchers and Inuvialuit. I hope you can continue your work in the future.

Billy Storr: wishes Kayla best of luck in her future endeavours.

Michelle also wished Kayla luck, and she had fun doing the science chat interview.

Dave said great work to Kayla - he will pass these pieces on to the Western Arctic Field Unit and they will also share.

#### Mike and Kait - Jessica Norris, potential Master's Student

Kait and Mike have been chatting with Jessica Norris, who is an Inuvialuit beneficiary who recently completed a science degree with University of Alberta. She has more recently been working with YG. She is interested in doing a Master's related to the YNS. Mike has been in conversation with Murray Humphries at McGill University. Jessica has applied to McGill. Kait and Mike are working with Jessica and Murray on developing a wildlife project with strong community engagement. We want a project that is ready to go for Jan 2021. Looking at muskox work (implementing the muskox research strategy). There is a basic stipend from McGill but we'd like to be able to enhance that stipend to give her a living wage so she can focus on her studies. Kait and Mike have been looking at potential overlap with Jessica's skills and interest and WMAC NS priorities (e.g. a muskox workshop, some PCH related outreach work).

Lindsay: is this a companion type project to Laurence's work through McGill?

Mike: it's different but complementary. It focuses on the population component. Through the Polar Knowledge project we had identified some of this work. We were going to do it a bit differently, but we can likely re-orient that work and find some money for Jessica there as well. Jessica's work with YG is wrapping up this week. She would start at McGill in January 2021. We can even get her involved in field work for next summer.

#### Mike - Canadian Mountain Network

Mike was approached about a funding opportunity last week through the Canadian Mountain Network. An Expression of Interest was released last week with a very tight turnaround. They want to create 5-8 research nodes in mountainous areas. Emphasizing integrating Indigenous and science knowledge. Much of what is already happening is in line with the funding objectives. The work would look at climate

change and wildlife. They want a full proposal by April 1, but the expression of interest is due Nov 5th. Mike is proposing submitting an expression of interest, and then we can discuss the idea further with the Council.

Lindsay: the Council has been trying to do more work related to bridging Indigenous knowledge and science, also building more research partnerships and relationships. This is in line with our goals in that regard.

All members on the call were in support of submitting an EOI and collaborating on a more fulsome proposal later.

#### IFA Research Proposals

The call for proposals has been sent out to YG and Canada. Project review happens in December.

#### HR Support

There is a proposal in the meeting folder for HR support engaging Lee Vincent from Visionary Seeds. Lindsay will talk to each Inuvialuit member about the proposal. Members are asked to read the proposal before the next meeting and be ready to provide formal approval.

#### Maternity Leave proposal

WMAC NS has been out of touch on a maternity leave policy (the current Council policy is so out of date that it doesn't meet legal standards). The JS revised their maternity leave policy - they looked at a few different options and decided to adopt the federal maternity leave policy. Lindsay suggests that WMAC NS do the same. Suggest that folks review this proposed policy and be ready to adopt it at the next WMAC NS meeting.

As the JS reviews its other internal policies, the Chair and staff will likely be bringing more of these proposals to the Council for adoption.

#### IRC Cruise Ship Management Plan Survey

IRC just shared their cruise ship management plan survey with the Council today. Feedback is due in two days. Kait will share that information with the Council and also provide feedback to IRC on how inappropriate that turnaround time is.

#### Enhanced community outreach in Aklavik (Billy Archie)

Suggest adding to next meeting agenda, work with staff to develop some ideas and options in the meantime.

**Motion 2020-10-05** to adjourn the meeting – Moved by Billy Archie, seconded by Billy Storr.