

Annual Report

April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013



Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)
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The Yukon North Slope

The Yukon North Slope is an area of land and sea stretching from Alaska to the Northwest Territories. It includes all of the land in the north Yukon where the rivers and streams drain into the Beaufort Sea. It also includes islands, such as Herschel Island, and both the near shore and offshore waters.

The Yukon North Slope region has no roads or towns and there are few signs of development. However, there are many seasonal hunting camps used by the Inuvialuit.

The Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic have a special connection to this land. They have relied on the region's wildlife for hundreds of years. While most Inuvialuit now live in nearby communities such as Aklavik and Inuvik, many return to the North Slope on an annual basis to hunt, trap and fish.

Inuvialuit Final Agreement

In 1984, the Inuvialuit of the Western Arctic signed a land claims agreement with the Government of Canada. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA) provides a way for the Inuvialuit to participate in economic and social development and decisions in the north. The agreement also protects and conserves the Arctic wildlife and their environments.

The area of land covered by the IFA, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), includes a large area in the NWT called the Western Arctic, parts of the Beaufort Sea and the Yukon North Slope.

The Yukon North Slope receives special attention in the IFA. Chapter 12 of the agreement establishes a special conservation management approach for the region.

The IFA defines the Inuvialuit right to harvest wildlife in both the North Slope and the Western Arctic. These rights may only be restricted for conservation or public safety. If development occurs, the IFA has a wildlife compensation system that helps to restore wildlife populations and habitat and to assist Inuvialuit when their harvesting activities are disrupted.

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)

The management priority for the North Slope is the conservation of the land, wildlife and Inuvialuit traditional use of the area. To ensure these goals are met, the IFA established the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), or WMAC (NS).

WMAC (NS) provides advice to governments and other agencies on all matters related to wildlife management on the North Slope. The Council is responsible for conservation management planning and management plan for the Yukon North Slope and advising on planning and management of Ivvavik National Park and Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park. The Council also determines and recommends appropriate quotas for Inuvialuit harvesting of wildlife on the Yukon North Slope. To carry out these tasks, WMAC (NS) works closely with the Yukon,

NWT and federal governments, other co-management boards, the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee and the Inuvialuit Game Council.

Yukon North Slope Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan

WMAC (NS) developed the Yukon North Slope Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan as required by the IFA. The Plan provides direction for the conservation of wildlife, habitat and traditional Inuvialuit use on the Yukon North Slope.

Volume 1 of the Plan is an environmental overview that provides an introduction to the land, its people and resources. Volume 2 of the Plan is intended for those with management, conservation and resource use interests on the Yukon North Slope. It is a frame of reference that WMAC (NS), governments, the Inuvialuit, and other agencies can assess priorities and work on the Yukon North Slope. Volume 3 includes the Yukon North Slope Wildlife Population Status Reports. For more than 30 species included, these reports provide information on: estimated population size, population distribution and range, unique characteristics of the population, management concerns, information gaps, and management of the population.

Work has been initiated to update and revise the plan. During the period covered by this Activity Report, the plan's revisions were advanced. The Plan can be found online at <http://www.wmacns.ca/conservation/wcmp/>. Hard copies are available from the WMAC (NS) Secretariat.

Projects and Research

Wildlife Research Funded Through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement

Each year WMAC (NS) reviews proposals for research projects related to wildlife management and ecological monitoring on the Yukon North Slope; to ensure they are consistent with the goals of the IFA, wildlife conservation and management goals for the North Slope, and the interests and rights of the Inuvialuit. The Council makes recommendations, as appropriate, to support projects with IFA implementation funding. If required, the Council will also recommend projects receive IFA implementation funding support from Parks Canada, the Yukon Government, and/or the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Recommendations made by the Council are based on priorities identified in the *Yukon North Slope Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan*, the *Yukon North Slope Long Term Research Plan*, and other applicable plans. Research priorities are also identified by the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee, residents of Aklavik, and the Inuvialuit Game Council, as well as, Environment Yukon, Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The Council monitors the progress of all recommended projects through presentations and final reports from all agencies that receive funding.

The Council recommended IFA funding in 2012-2013 for the following research projects:

Herschel Island Ecological Monitoring Program

Ecological monitoring is identified as a priority in the *Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk) Territorial Park Management Plan*. Ongoing since 1999, Herschel Island Rangers work closely with researchers to measure and record the impacts of human activity and rapid ecological change observed on the island. The program is guided by a comprehensive instruction manual that describes standardized data collection methods and data management.

There are four main components to the monitoring program: wildlife, vegetation, abiotic (permafrost), and human use. Program activities undertaken in 2012-2013 include: Herschel Island Ranger orientation, training and program review; incidental wildlife observations, including wildlife found dead in the field; Arctic Char monitoring; the annual breeding bird and birds of prey surveys; Black Guillemot population and nest monitoring; CANTEX vegetation monitoring; daily weather records; permafrost and snow depth measurements; slump monitoring for rates of erosion; as well as, beach landing strip monitoring; impact monitoring of cruise ship visits; and the collection of harvest data and visitor use statistics.

In 2012, 10 years of wildlife, ecological, geophysical, weather and visitor data collected through the Herschel Island monitoring program were compiled and presented in *Herschel Island—Qikiqtaruk Inventory, Monitoring, and Research Program: Key Findings and Recommendations* (Dorothy Cooley, Cameron D. Eckert, and Richard R. Gordon).

Yukon North Slope Grizzly Bear Research Project

Yukon Government, Parks Canada, the Aklavik HTC and WMAC (NS) are working together to learn more about the grizzly bear population on the Yukon North Slope. This study uses GPS and VHF collars, and a DNA mark-recapture study to estimate the birth rate, death rate, and the rate and direction of population change. The study also looks the sex, age, physical characteristics and location of hunter-killed bears to better understand how harvesting affects the grizzly bear population. Gathering and integrating local expert and traditional knowledge into the scientific management framework is a goal of the project, as well as the development of a long-term population monitoring program for grizzly bears on the Yukon North Slope.

The information collected through this study will help governments, co-management boards and committees, and community organizations make management decisions regarding the harvest quota for grizzly bears. The information will also be used to establish baseline population monitoring.

Analysis of diet information and health indicators was completed in 2012-13, and a final demographic and population estimate was established. Researchers are now preparing a final report, and will be presenting information to the communities in 2013.

Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Coop

The Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge (ABEK) Coop was founded in 1994 when representatives from several community groups, agencies and governments began a collaborative ecological monitoring program. Goals of the program include: monitoring and assessing ecosystem changes in the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and adjacent coastal and marine areas; encouraging the use of both science-based studies and studies based on local and traditional

knowledge in ecological monitoring and ecosystem management; improving communications and understanding among governments, aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and scientists with regard to ecosystem knowledge and management; and, fostering capacity-building and training opportunities in northern communities in the context of these goals.

Objectives of the 2012-2013 program included: (1) monitoring ecological change following the revised monitoring survey and data standards relevant to the North Slope communities; (2) validating and reporting on trends and changes as a result of the monitoring program; and (3) completing analysis and reports based on a new survey questionnaire (with continued emphasis on developing analysis of older and recent data).

Porcupine Caribou Herd Radio and Satellite Collar Program

The Porcupine Caribou Herd Satellite Collar program is a multi-year program administered by Yukon Government in close association with partner organizations - Parks Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Porcupine Caribou Management Board, Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board, and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Directed by the Porcupine Caribou Management Plan, radio and satellite collars are used to locate the herd for various surveys (calf birth and survival, over-winter calf survival and full composition counts) and to identify particular individuals in the herd to act as a sampling focus. Approximately 100 collars are maintained on adult females, and 15 on adult bulls. A full census and surveys to estimate calf birth and survival rates were attempted in 2012, but unfortunately were hampered by poor weather conditions and herd movement.

In 2012-2013, research funds were used to: administer the satellite collar program (deployment costs, collar purchase, satellite system fees and data retrieval), conduct a rut count, and retrieve dead and shed collars.

Satellite Collar Program

Currently there are 12 active satellite collars on the herd. Satellite collars document the general distribution of the herd, routes and migration timing and are cost effective because aircraft is not required to obtain this data. Location data is managed by Yukon Government and shared with partner agencies.

Rut Count

In years when a photo census of the herd is conducted, a composition count during rut is also done to document the bull ratio. The purpose of this survey is to determine whether bull only harvest is having a detrimental affect on breeding, and to provide sex and age composition data to assist in the development of population estimates when census data are collected.

Retrieval of dead and shed collars

Approximately 70 dead and shed collars were transmitting unnecessarily throughout the Yukon portion of the range, making it difficult to find available frequencies for new collars. Thirty-six collars were recovered (5 satellite collars and 31 radio collars) and 32 were searched for, but deemed to be off the air. Retrieving defunct collars allows for more efficient programming and the deployment of new collars, critical to the ongoing monitoring of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.



Retrieved satellite and radio collars

Beaufort Sea Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study

The WMACs (North Slope and Northwest Territories), in partnership with Yukon Government, Government of Northwest Territories and Environment Canada are carrying out a multi-year polar bear traditional knowledge project (PBTk). The project began in 2009, and in 2010 Inuvialuit traditional knowledge holders from Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbor, Ulukhaktok, Aklavik and Inuvik were interviewed about their knowledge of polar bears. The goal of the project is to document and use Inuvialuit knowledge about polar bears to inform management actions and decisions as well as contribute to national polar bear management and technical committees. The compiled body of knowledge will also compliment existing and proposed research efforts.

In 2011, the interviews were transcribed, verified, coded and spatial information digitized. In the fall of 2012, a verification tour was held to verify information collected during the interviews; each of the six ISR communities were visited. In January 2013 a three- day workshop was held in Inuvik with a selected group of traditional knowledge holders, identified by the HTC's, to interpret aspects of the report.



Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Workshop participants from all six ISR communities, January 2013

The final report for the Beaufort Sea Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge Study is expected within the year.

Ecological Integrity Monitoring in the Forest and Tundra Ecosystems of Ivvavik National Park

This monitoring project in Ivvavik National Park (partnered with Trent University) focused on animal pollinators, number and diversity, and the variation in environmental factors and the biological responses to them in the short-term, and assessed the consequences of climate warming in the long-term by quantifying changes from earlier baseline data. The three components of the

project were: abundance and species richness of breeding birds in Ivvavik National Park, breeding success and demography of American Robins, and the pollination of dioecious plants in northern Yukon. This project directly assisted the long-term monitoring program for Ivvavik National Park with the establishment of vegetation plots in the forest and tundra of the Sheep Creek region, and completion of a breeding bird survey protocol.

Monitoring the Coastal Zone Ecosystem in Ivvavik National Park

The objective of this project is to develop a sustainable and effective long term monitoring program for the Coastal Ecological Integrity (EI) indicator for Ivvavik NP. (The coastal plain has been identified as a sensitive environment that is ecologically and culturally important.) When completed the Coastal EI Indicator will be monitored and evaluated by an index of inter-related measures, some



Assessing cultural resources vulnerability to loss from coastal erosion in Ivvavik National Park

ground-based (for example, ground validation of rates of bank retreat) and some using satellite imagery (for example, overall estimates of shoreline retreat and deposition).

During the summer of 2012, activities were undertaken to monitor, map and assess the vulnerability of coastal ecosystems.

In December, project partners (Parks Canada Agency, Geological Survey of Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, Canadian High Arctic Research Station, Yukon Territorial Government, Alfred Wegener Institute and McGill University) met to discuss work priorities and create a monitoring work plan. A workshop held in Aklavik in March 2013 provided input on key attributes possibly at risk.

Richardson Mountain Moose Survey

Approximately 610 square kilometers of habitable moose range in the Richardson Mountains was surveyed in 2012. This area was surveyed in 1989 and 2000 when the highest moose density per available habitat in the Yukon to date was observed. The purpose of the survey was to determine the minimum number of moose available for harvest in the Richardson Mountains, and to document late winter habitat use and the long term value of these ranges, which can then be used to identify important moose habitats across the Yukon North Slope.

Harvest Data Collection – Model Development

With the signing of the Harvest Management Plan for the Porcupine Caribou Herd in Canada, Parties agreed to collect caribou harvest data. Environment Canada originally contracted the development of a Microsoft Access database to house the harvest data collected in the communities. In 2012, development of this database continued when the contractor who developed the database travelled to Inuvik to work with the Government of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Government staff on the Aklavik and Gwitchin Renewable Resource Board harvest data. Future plans include a working meeting in Aklavik to further review and test the database, and install it on the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (AHTC) computer. The database will then be ready for the AHTC to use to house, analyze and report on their harvest data collection.

Projects Funded by WMAC (NS)

A portion of the WMAC (NS) budget is allocated to special projects including wildlife management, community participation, traditional knowledge, outreach and education.

Herschel Island Book



Herschel Island, Qikiqtaryuk, a natural and cultural history of Yukon's Arctic island, was published by the Council in 2012. Co-authored by over 40 people with specialized knowledge or understanding about Herschel Island, Dr. Chris Burn led, compiled and edited the 242 page publication.



In 2013, the Council nominated Dr. Chris Burn for a Royal Canadian Geographical Society Gold Medal for his contribution to this valuable publication.

Book launch for Herschel Island, Qikiqtaryuk

Podcasts

“The Living North”, produced by WMAC (NS), is an ongoing series that highlight various aspects of traditional life and resource management on the Yukon North Slope and lessons from elsewhere that could be applied there. In 2012-2013, five new podcasts were broadcast:

Getting to Best: Traditional Knowledge + Science (Peter Armitage)

Work It: Best Practices for Wildlife Co-Management Challenges (Gregor Gilbert)

Land Claims, the Law and Co-Management: an interview with Nigel Banks

Taqulik Hepa on the Value of Subsistence Hunting

Nunatsiavut: Building on Co-Management (Aaron Dale)

Weights and Measures: What is balanced development for Canada's North (Pete Ewans)

How It Looks From Here - Ernest Pokiak from Tuktoyaktuk

All podcasts can be accessed by following the podcast link on the WMAC (NS) homepage.

Species Status Report

The Council regularly updates species status reports for the Yukon North Slope. The report includes the status of species including: population status, important habitats, harvest regime, threats, research and monitoring, management regime, and community based information. This report makes up a component of the Wildlife Management and Conservation Plan and is updated approximately every three years. In 2012-13 the Council updated the January 2008 report. Species status reports are available on the Council's website.

Yukon North Slope Conference (YNSC)

Under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, the Council in partnership with Yukon Government is mandated to hold conferences related to the Yukon North Slope. In October of 2012, the partners prepared and hosted the eighth YNSC in Whitehorse, with the theme of co-management:

“Pathways to Arctic Innovation–Arctic Wildlife Conservation & Co-Management Lessons Learned and Future Challenges.

Co-management of wildlife was introduced with the signing of the first modern day land claim in Arctic Canada more than 35 years ago. Building on collective experiences over this time, conference organizers structured a dialogue between aboriginal organizations and authorities, wildlife management and environmental impact review boards, and governments from across the North to explore major challenges, lessons learned, and future innovations in wildlife co-management.

Conference themes were related to the role of aboriginal traditional knowledge in wildlife management, resource use and rights, and how co-management can contribute to sustainability-based resource development, with focus on how these challenges could be met and what innovations could be applied.

One hundred and fifty eight people, from Alaska to Labrador, participated in the conference.



Curry Dixon, Minister of Environment addressed participants of the 2012 North Slope Conference

North Slope Conservation Award



The Yukon North Slope Conservation Award was created by the Council in 2012, to recognize outstanding contributions to the conservation of wildlife, habitat and traditional use on Yukon's North Slope. Presented at the Yukon North Slope Conference, this year's recipients were Richard Gordon, Dorothy Cooley, Mervin Joe and Dr. Chris Burn.

2012 Yukon North Slope Conservation Award recipients

Other Council Activities

The Council dedicates much of its time to reviewing and providing advice on research, management plans, policies and legislation affecting conservation and development on the Yukon North Slope. The Council has been involved in the following initiatives over the past year:

- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) COP 16
- Planning and involvement in the steering committee for Community Based Monitoring Program for ISR
- Ivvavik State of the Park Report (SoPR)
- Non-detriment finding (NDF) for Grizzly bear
- Assisting with and managing the Polar Bear Traditional Knowledge study
- Strategic framework for Porcupine Caribou
- Species and Risk report for Polar bear in NWT
- Parks Canada wild animal regulations
- Review of Hershel Island monitoring program
- Yukon North Slope Muskox Co-management Plan
- Imperial Oil preliminary information package review
- Inuvialuit and Inupiat research action plan
- IFA implementation funding renewal
- Beaufort Regional Environmental Assessment

Working Together

WMAC (NS) continues to work with its partners toward the conservation of wildlife, habitat and traditional Inuvialuit use on the Yukon North Slope.

Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee

WMAC (NS) works closely with the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee (HTC) to ensure the harvesting needs and wildlife concerns of the Aklavik Inuvialuit are addressed in the Council's decisions. Through meetings with the Aklavik HTC, WMAC (NS) has provided information and shared ideas on wildlife management on the Yukon North Slope.

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (Northwest Territories)

Like the WMAC (NS) the WMAC (NWT) was established under the IFA. It has a mandate to “to conserve and protect wildlife, habitat and traditional Inuvialuit use” in the NWT portion of the ISR. The Council works with the WMAC (NWT) on matters related to the management of transboundary species such as polar bear, grizzly bear and caribou. Maintaining a close relationship helps to create strong, informed and integrated management decisions across territorial boundaries.

Herschel Island - Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park

WMAC (NS) works with Yukon Government, Parks Branch on wildlife research, management and ecological monitoring in Hershel Island Territorial Park.

The Chief Park Ranger for Herschel Island – Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park, Richard Gordon, attends regular Council meetings to provide updates on activities in the Park. Staff at Hershel Island provides updates to the Council in the spring and fall related to that year’s activity.

Parks Canada and Ivvavik National Park

WMAC (NS) works with the Parks Canada Western Arctic Field Unit on wildlife research, management and ecological monitoring in Ivvavik National Park.

The Western Arctic Field Unit is an active partner in the Yukon North Slope Grizzly Bear Research Project. Christian Bucher, a Parks Canada employee, was the Canada member of the Council until his retirement from the Council in September 2012. At that time, Christopher Hunter, Parks Canada employee, was appointed as the Government of Canada member.

Sharing Information

The Council’s website includes a host of information about the North Slope, the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, Council activities and a North Slope Traditional Knowledge database. WMAC (NS) continually updates the site with all of its publications, meeting minutes, and other relevant information. Visit the website at <http://www.wmacns.ca>.

WILDLIFE WATCH. This newsletter shares information about activities on the Yukon North Slope that may be of interest to the community. *Wildlife Watch* is available online at <http://www.wmacns.ca/resources/newsletters/>.

Meetings

Council Meetings

July 16-19, 2012 Sheep Creek, YT
October 5, 2012 Whitehorse, YT
December 8-10, 2012 Inuvik, NWT
March 19-21, 2013 Whitehorse, YT

Teleconferences

January 31, 2013



WMAC (NS) quarterly meeting, March 2012

Other Meetings

International Polar Year- <i>From Knowledge to Action</i>	April 22-27, 2012	Montreal, QC
Herschel Island Book Launch	May 9th, 2012	Whitehorse, YT
Polar Bear Administrative Committee	May 27, 2012	Ottawa, ON
Joint Secretariat Board Meeting	June 5-6, 2012	Whitehorse, YT
Inuvialuit- Inupiat Meeting	Aug 7-8, 2012	Tuktoyaktuk, NWT
Yukon North Slope Conference	Oct 2-6, 2012	Whitehorse, YT
Beaufort Regional Environmental Assessment Oil Spill Training Workshop	Oct 23-25, 2012	Inuvik, NWT
Circum-Arctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment Network (CARMA)	Dec 4-6, 2012	Vancouver, BC
Joint WMAC Meeting	Dec 8, 2012	Inuvik, NWT
Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee	Dec 10, 2012	Aklavik, NWT
PBTK Traditional Knowledge Holder Workshop	Jan 29-31, 2013	Inuvik, NWT
Polar Bear Technical Committee Meeting	Feb 5-7, 2013	Iqaluit, NWT
PCMB Annual Harvest Meeting	Feb 12-14, 2013	Inuvik, NWT
Wildlife Collaring/Handling Workshop	Feb 17-18, 2013	Inuvik NWT
BREA Results Workshop	Feb 19-21, 2013	Inuvik, NWT
Coastal Monitoring Workshop	Mar 27, 2013	Aklavik, NWT
CITES	Mar 3-15, 2013	Bangkok, Thailand



Ernest Pokiak in discussions with the head of the American delegation at CITES

The Council also participated in ongoing meetings of the Polar Bear Technical Committee, Polar Bear Administrative Committee, Inuit CITES coordination meetings, Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Coop, and IFA implementation funding discussions.

Council Membership

Members

Danny C. Gordon
Inuvialuit Game Council

Ernest Pokiak
Inuvialuit Game Council

Rob Florkiewicz
Yukon Government

Christian Bucher
(ending Sept 2012)
Government of Canada

Chris Hunter
(beginning Oct 2012)
Government of Canada

Chair

Lindsay Staples

Staff

Jennifer Smith
Resource Person

Rosa Brown
Resource Person (interim)

Christine Cleghorn
Resource Person (on leave)

Alternates

Billy Storr
(ending Sept 2012)
Inuvialuit Game Council

Michelle Gruban
(beginning Sept 2012)
Inuvialuit Game Council

Evelyn Storr
Inuvialuit Game Council

Dorothy Cooley
Government of Yukon

Wendy Nixon
Government of Canada



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