



## MEETING MINUTES

### WMAC (NS) Quarterly Meeting<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

December 5-6, 2016

Inuvik, NT

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**Lindsay Staples** (Chair), **Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Todd Powell** Yukon Government (Member), **Matt Clarke** Yukon Government (Alternate), **Chris Hunter** Government of Canada (Member), **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Mike Sutor** Yukon Government (Technical Support), **Kelly Milner** (Staff), **Aimee Schmidt** (Staff), **Deon Arey** Inuvialuit Game Council (Alternate).

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#### Monday, December 5, 2016

##### A. Call to Order<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

Lindsay Staples (Chair) called the meeting to order at 8:35 am.

##### B. Review and Approval of Agenda

December 4 meeting was cancelled because of flight delays. The Council determined to compress the agenda and focus on key priorities including IFA proposals, budgeting, and planning processes. No additions were made.

***Approval of Agenda – Moved by Danny C. Gordon, seconded by Chris Hunter.***

##### C. Review and Approval of Minutes

**July 2016 Meeting Minutes** – Page 14 reference to cruise ship community benefits modified. Ernest's name corrected. Page 13 reference to core calving area revised.

***Approval of July 2016 Minutes (as modified) – Moved Chris Hunter, seconded by Ernest.***

**September 2016 Meeting Minutes** - Minor revisions based on what is in Dropbox. Staff

will find a way for page numbers to show up on minutes in Dropbox.

***Approval of September 2016 Minutes (as modified) – Moved by Ernest, seconded by Chris Hunter.***

**October 2016 Teleconference Meetings** – Ernest noted he was absent with regrets. This will be incorporated into the minutes.

***Approval of October 2016 Teleconference Minutes (as modified) – Moved by Todd Powell, seconded by Danny Gordon.***

#### **D. Review of Action Items** [L] [SEP]

Kelly led the review of action items. The Action Item table was revised and is included as an appendix to these minutes.

#### **E. Correspondence** [L] [SEP]

Lindsay led the review of correspondence. He highlighted the outgoing letter to COSEWIC regarding the status of barren-ground caribou. Question around process and when Wildlife Management Boards(WMBs)/COSEWIC need to communicate under existing policy agreement. Notes compiled on clarification on policy of boards and councils in recovery planning were shared with PCMB. Initial plans for WMBs to meet with COSEWIC in April were discussed. Council members were encouraged to review the letters and provide any comments.

***Action 16-12-01 - Invite PCMB (Joe Tetlich) to WMAC (NS) September meeting to provide update on PCMB and HMP.***

#### **F. Parks Canada – Resource Conservation Research and Monitoring Update.**

David Tevaris provided an overview of the program and update on activities. The full presentation is included as an appendix to these minutes.

##### **1. Ecological Integrity Monitoring**

There are five indicators monitored for both Firth River (freshwater) and tundra ecosystems. These indicators were described and discussed with the Council. For freshwater, it was noted that the gauge station has been an important data set for WMAC and long-term sustainable funding should be requested through the Parks Canada IFA Implementation Funding request. The Council also asked about baseline data and how trends will be presented to ensure an ongoing focus on ongoing monitoring programs and there is an ability to provide regular reporting on trends and ecosystem health in the future.

The indicators for tundra monitoring were also discussed (caribou, breeding birds, permafrost, wildlife cameras and landscape-level vegetation change). The Council asked questions around land settling (subsidence) as a result of permafrost melt and if there is any information on it.

The overall EI monitoring program is currently under review. In advance of IFA funding requests, more detailed information was provided on two key indicator programs.

**Wildlife Cameras** – There are currently 34 remote cameras placed along the Firth River corridor. Their main objective is to estimate bear presence, but gather information on other wildlife populations and weather. The Council asked questions about observations of caribou and muskox interactions and some of the images the cameras have captured. There were also questions around the timing of bears coming out of hibernation and if that is changing over time.

The current focus of this project is do to a power analysis to establish whether or not grizzly bear occupancy in the Firth Valley can be determined using the existing dataset. There will be a report completed this year. The images are also going to be included on a website for public viewing.

Most of the images collected are of caribou, grizzly bears and muskox. There appears to be a higher chance of capturing images of bears along the coastal area during the summer. A question was asked if the individual bears can be differentiated in the photos and if there are any correlations between the timing of carnivore and raven images.

**Permafrost Monitoring** – Four deep-well permafrost probes are installed in the Park and is part of a larger regional dataset (probes in Vuntut National Park and Herschel Island Territorial Park). This data is relevant to provide information on trend lines for permafrost temperature change.

This year the focus is on testing a new system of collecting information on the active layer (5 cm increments) that could complement existing information on permafrost temperature change. The long-term plan is to deploy these monitoring stations in the same location as wildlife cameras. Questions were asked regarding how bear-proof the devices are and if there is any value in having satellite uplink.

**River Based Monitoring** – Once a year monitoring trip on the Firth River looking at water quality, invertebrates, wildlife cameras. These are cost-effective projects that allow for the collection of lots of different data. It also allows for community members to participate.

This year a pilot trip was carried out in partnership with Canadian River Expeditions (commercial trip) to reduce costs. There are pros and cons to the program, but overall this was a successful approach but there are considerations for how to do this in the future. A second trip will be carried out this year to help assess if this approach should be used in the future. The Council noted that the cons presented were significant and if an additional \$20K is all that is required to eliminate the cons, then it could be easily

included in future Parks Canada IFA funding discussions. In particular, the Council suggested that local youth should be included in the project. There needs to be a focused approach to seeing the benefits to Inuvialuit.

## **2. Conservation Science**

These are projects to address specific problems or concerns arising from the ecological monitoring program or community members, HTC or boards. There is a need to balance the efforts put into conservation monitoring and science. The Council stressed there is a need to see baseline information and outputs.

***Muskox-Caribou Interaction*** - This project examines the potential role of muskox in changing caribou distribution and address community concerns that recent muskox counts are underestimates. Since 2015, 14 female muskoxen have been collared across the North Slope, ABEKS TK information has been reviewed, a population survey has been completed and a pilot project on ground-based observations has been carried out.

There will be a meeting with the HTC to discuss the future of the project and next steps, including whether or not the rest of the collars will be deployed and if a calf productivity survey is required. Options for future research could be looking at seasonal habitat use by muskox and caribou and continuing the pilot work on local interactions (behavior and diet). The Council suggested the observations should be documented over a longer period of time and to also keep in mind the camera options.

***Dolly Varden*** – This project is to estimate the population size of Dolly Varden in the Firth River and Joe Creek. Samples have been taken over the past 3 years. The current population is estimated to be around 100,000 fish (but with a large confidence interval). If correct, this may be the largest Dolly Varden population in Canada. Additional sampling work to help refine the estimate may be carried out in 2017 depending on the final results on the 2016 data and successful funding applications. The Council suggested that if additional work is done in 2017, efforts should be made to connect with the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Service.

It was noted that two pink salmon caught on the Firth River and other salmon were caught on the Big Fish River. A spawning population of Dolly Varden was confirmed in Fish Creek and 500 were caught and measured.

The Council also noted that the ELC has been completed and a TK filter has been applied (via the study that Round River is undertaking for the Council). This should be incorporated into future work.

## **G. Report from the Chair**

### **Joint Secretariat Update**

Lindsay has spent a lot of time on this over the fall. There were concerns about the state of the workplace culture and functioning of the JS. A third-party review was conducted and several recommendations made. The JS is now in the process of implementing some

of these recommendations. A full HR review has been completed and some changes will be undertaken in the workplace. In addition, a process is currently underway to recruit a new Executive Director.

### **CEAA Review** [SEP]

The federal government is currently reviewing the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*. Lindsay has been asked participate on behalf of ITK. The interest in this review is to ensure that CEAA legislation and the provisions under the IFA are in alignment. Important report chapters of the report: indigenous rights, regional environmental assessments to address cumulative effects, inter-jurisdictional issues, and commitments to the address climate change. The report will be posted in the next few weeks.

### **Implementation Funding Update**

A template for submitting WMAC(NS) projections was sent earlier this week. Lindsay and staff will work on addressing this information request. This information needs to be submitted to the federal government by the end of January.

***Action 16-12-02: Staff to distribute draft submission in early January and hold a teleconference to review with Council members before the January, 2017 JS meeting.***

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## **H. Report from Staff**

### **Herschel Park Planning**

Kelly is representing WMAC (NS) at the Herschel Park Planning process. The working group has now developed a draft vision, principles, strategies and goals. This information will be taken to Aklavik in January for feedback. A public process will be carried out after the Aklavik workshop. A final draft will be completed by September. The process for WMAC's review and recommendation is being discussed with Yukon Parks.

### **COSEWIC Status Report on Barren Ground Caribou**

This issue was discussed during the correspondence review. This topic will be discussed with the HTC in Aklavik.

### **Traditional Knowledge Project**

A workshop was held in Aklavik in October to review the (Eastern) Yukon North Slope Ecological Land Classification and put an Inuvialuit knowledge filter on it. This will assist in refining the classification to better associate key wildlife species with their specific habitat preferences. This new ELC will be used as the habitat layer for the Wildlife Conservation and Management Plan. Focal species TK interviews were held in November. Over 20 people were interviewed. The interviews are currently being transcribed and an analysis will be carried out over the next few weeks.

### **Traditional Use Project**

Staff are working with Peter Armitage to finalize this project. The final map products and

analysis should be completed by the end of March. Staff will help produce context pieces to accompany the maps. Production of the final products may be rolled over until next year based on financial

## **I. IFA Funding Proposals**

### ***Parks Canada Proposals***

The two proposals for camera and permafrost monitoring were previously discussed and agreed to by Council. There was a lengthy discussion around programming for Arctic Borderlands & funding for supporting CBMP for 2017. Council noted that ISR investment is significant in CBMP.

**ABEKS proposal** – WMAC asked Borderlands to draft strategy to show how they are still relevant to WMAC. PCMB sat down with ABEKS two-day strategy session to prove relevance was held. High support for this program by the PCMB membership individually; question arose as to whether Borderlands will be operating this year; Council member asks whether Borderlands is still useful since now other organization exist that perform similar functions.

Borderlands is looking to bring forward a product explaining its relevance for WMAC to consider. A Council member noted that the program requires improvements but since they provide a longer-term data set there is potentially a lot of good data/information in this program. Review of Borderlands is looking at improving the data and looking for different projects to make it more relevant.

Chair noted that good reasons for support of this program exist, but expectations always exceed the delivery of the program. The deliverables have been slow to materialize in the past. In addition there is overlap between Borderlands and CBMP in terms of the services they provide. To justify the expenditure of IFA implementation funds, the Chair requested concrete deliverables from Borderlands by March 31<sup>st</sup> – how does it support Wildlife Management (will it provide useful sound information to guide decision-making?).

He suggested a statement of study/program methods, similar to what is expected of other TK/LK projects in the ISR (see ISR polar bear study and the YNS traditional use study). It was also suggested that there needs to be some statements about data quality and reliability.

### ***Yukon Government Proposals***

**Wildlife Use of Avadlek Spit** – request to replace cameras and add new camera spots. Cameras do not survive long in salty conditions so contribution is needed to replace commitments. Council member suggests that it would be better to put cameras in the ground and fasten them to pipes rather than logs. Council member suggested speaking to NavCanada and request permission to put the cameras on these towers. The project is continuation of last year, with addition of a couple new camera sites & equipment.

The life of program depends on finding sustainable use of equipment so it does not have to be replaced each year.

**Identifying & Mapping across NS** - Request of \$8000. Use habitat ecologists to look for small ecosystems that are unique or rare. This would be another layer for decision support tool Round River is creating. Tool to look at weak areas (77 different eco-sites) to find truly unique ecosystems or rare plant communities.

Council member asked about criteria for what constitutes “ ecosystem of conservation concern.” Prevalence of rare plants is one indicator but possibly other indicators. This project is piece of bigger picture that could be layered with wildlife conservation management plan approach. Project will have a one-year duration.

**PCH NS Use** - Renewed request from last year that includes collar fees

**PC Rut Count**- Has been done in the past, opportunistic count, only 3 have ever been successful on the herd (last was 2012). Will contribute to population model and look at harvest impacts (ratio of male vs female). Caribou biologist has identified need for better composition data on the herd. Survey happens where ever caribou are during the rut (could be Alaska or YT).

A council member asked about methods for this approach. A fixed wing will find the caribou to figure out where collars are and then a helicopter does sex and aging of around the collared animals. This helps us understand ratio of male to females in the herd. The Harvest management plan identified this as a tool for monitoring.

**Richardson Sheep Survey**- Sheep have been in decline for a while and this project would help confirm where this population is at and support management decisions. Council requested information on draft sheep management plan progress. YG has taken a step back from the draft plan, but the plan recommended a survey every 3 years. A council member noted there has been discussion between GRRB, GNWT, Vuntut Government to move forward with the draft management plan.

**Muskox Composition** – proposing to support flights to continue count of small muskox vs big muskox.

**PB Survey** - \$30,000 would go into survey as planned for 2018 across entire Beaufort run by USGS. Request for supplemental funding of additional \$70,000 for additional survey to come from YG. Council notes that we are already involved in the work conceptually and in design. Suggests making firm commitment of \$30,000. YG requested both surveys go forward, which may result into 2 populations numbers for the South Beaufort. Council member inquires as to when survey would be conducted. Aerial survey would be run in March or April. Distance sampling methodology has been tested in other locations, however, weather is a consideration. Council member noted that rough ice makes polar bear difficult see. Response was that a model accounts for this discrepancy. An additional benefit of the aerial survey is a non-invasive approach. The South Beaufort population status is currently unclear. Second survey on entire Beaufort will use infra-red vs. aerial counts.

## ***Environment Canada Proposals***

Requesting \$6000 for reprinting of the bird book. There are some options YG noted that the print run was small so they may run out if they promote it. Another option would be a web-based product. Council member suggested an app for wildlife. This could be treated as a pilot project on moving beyond merely printing the bird book. A suggestion was made to reserve the \$6000 for web version. The council may have funding within its budget to support the web version. An app could identify the sound of the bird and bring up the picture as well.

ABEKS – funding would be subject to report on outputs

## ***Recommendations***

For all projects, funding should be conditional upon a report by December 2017 (YG reports were excellent)

- **Wildlife Camera Monitoring** - approved
- **Permafrost Monitoring** - approved
- **NS Bird Pamphlet** - Recommendation to put \$6000 towards a web-based project.
- **ABEKS** – A council member inquired about where funding would be found for CBMP. Chair noted that line items used to be included in YG IFA wildlife program budget. The chair indicated his long-standing preference to see CBMP funded through JS budget. An internal discussion within the JS Board will address the issue. CBMP has strong support as a program within the ISR and Game Council and will produce harvest data at the end of this year, but the future funding of the program is uncertain. Recommendation for funding contingent upon completion of past deliverables. Chair expressed his reservations for funding based on questionable IGC support for the program.
- **Wildlife Use on Avadlek Spit** – Approved with note with revisions to ensure camera equipment is better looked after.
- **Mapping of Conservation Concern** - approved
- **PCH North Slope Use** - approved
- **PCH Rut Count** - approved
- **Richardson Sheep Survey** - approved
- **Muskox Composition Survey** - approved
- **PB Survey Support** - approved

***Motion 2016-09: To recommend all IFA proposals with conditions attached.  
Moved by Danny Gordon, Seconded by Ernest Pokiak***



## December 6, 2016

### MacKenzie Hotel, Inuvik

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**Ernest Pokiak** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Mike Sutor** Yukon Government (Technical Support), **Todd Powell** Yukon Government (Member), **Matt Clarke** Yukon Government (Alternate), **Chris Hunter** Government of Canada (Member), **Danny C. Gordon** Inuvialuit Game Council (Member), **Lindsay Staples** (Chair), **Kelly Milner** (Staff), **Aimee Schmidt** (Staff), **Deon Arey** Inuvialuit Game Council (Alternate).

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#### J. Financial Report

**2016/17 Budget** – The council reviewed the budget. There is currently a projected surplus that can be redirected into existing projects. The Council reviewed a running list of additional expenditures and they were generally approved. The focus will be on supporting the larger projects first with the smaller projects getting support based on need.

**Wage and Benefits Review** – Information on wage scale and benefits are included in the package. Options for a new wage scale will be prepared by staff with help from EC members to reflect the Federal Treasury requirements. This information will be shared with the Council in January and a decision around a new wage scale will be determined before March. It was suggested the new wage scale should be retroactive to April 2016. Health benefits are being set up through the Joint Secretariat and will be applied to payroll based on the scale provided by Blue Cross. The final costs will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Council.

#### K. Members Report

##### Inuvialuit Members:

- **Ernest Pokiak** did not have an update.
- **Danny C. Gordon** reported that there has been a fish harvest in the community with the presence of DFO. The community is also harvesting Porcupine caribou along the coast. There is a large number of caribou and they are staying in the same area. Aklavik has not seen the caribou like this since 1996. He also reported the community was quite happy with the Traditional Knowledge project that was carried out by WMAC (NS) and Round River. There was some discussion around harvesting bulls vs. cows and best hunting practices.

##### Yukon Government

- **Todd Powell** did not have an update. He did mention that some changes will be made to the Yukon State of the Environment report and additional information may be included regarding the Inuvialuit ELC and Polar Bear TK.

- **Mike Suitor** updated the group on his field activities. For Porcupine caribou, body condition work in Old Crow has been completed and some collaring activity will happen in March. Sensitive Habitat contract work is wrapping up. Range boundary work (where the herd can usually be found) has been completed and will be reviewed by PCMB, WMAC (NS) and communities. New maps showing satellite collar data are now online on the PCMB website.

Muskox collars were deployed in the fall but a few are left over and could be deployed as value-added on existing projects. Mike attended a muskox conference in Calgary and it was very valuable. The Council discussed some of the commercial opportunities with muskox – both guiding and knitting. There is an interest in getting more information on muskox. Mike is looking forward to having a discussion about muskox with the community of Aklavik to get more direction on additional work.

The Central Arctic caribou herd has declined substantially and over the past few years and Mike provided some information. There is some discussion about Porcupine Caribou absorbing some of the herd and more information is coming from Alaska. The Council will be updated as information is available. An information piece regarding a permafrost project on the North Slope has been shared with the Council.

## L. **Ivvavik Management Plan Update** [L-SEP]

**Chris Hunter** presented an update on the status of the Ivvavik Management Plan. The full presentation is provided as an appendix. The first complete draft of the plan has been received. The Council was asked to provide an initial high-level review of the vision statement, objectives, key strategies, and targets. The Council noted that the strategy titles and objectives should be more context-specific. The plan should address the abundance and diversity of wildlife within the park rather than focus exclusively on caribou. The translation of science and TK for visitors and Inuvialuit is not clearly addressed under the objectives within this draft. Separate objectives for visitors and Inuvialuit should exist within the plan. Objectives should include the creation of opportunities for Inuvialuit employment as well as opportunities for sharing stories between Inuvialuit elders and youth. Zoning should include allowances for Inuvialuit to go out on the land with visitors/clients for commercial and non-commercial guiding purposes. Historic cultural sites need to be properly identified and mapped. Finally the Council also noted that the IFA does constrain zoning within the park.

***Action 16-12-03: Staff to generate comments reviewing Ivvavik Park Management Plan and circulate these to the Council to review. These will be provided to Parks Canada by the end of January.***

## **M. ISR Polar Bear Management Plan**

WMAC(NS) needs to approve both the management plan and the framework for action and make a recommendation to Ministers for Canada. WMAC NWT, NS, IGC will recommend the plan to the Federal Minister of Environment, the Minister for the Environment Yukon, and the Minister of Environment NWT.

***Motion 16-10: WMACNS approves the final draft of ISR Polar Bear Management Plan, and the Framework for Action as tabled and in doing so recognizes the good efforts made by NWT Government and its management partners.***

***Moved by Ernest Pokiak, Seconded by Deon Arey***

## **N. Upcoming Meetings**

**Herschel Planning Meeting** – January 31 (or Feb. 7), Aklavik (Kelly and Danny)

**PBTC** – February 9-12, Winnipeg (Lindsay and Aimee)

**PC AHM** – February 12-14, Inuvik (Lindsay, Kelly and Deon)

**WMAC(NS) Council Meeting & Conservation Planning Meeting** – March 20-24, Whitehorse - *tentative*

***Motion 16-11: Meeting adjourned.***

***Moved by Ernest Pokiak, Second by Todd Powell***