

WMAC NS Quarterly Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2020

By Videoconference

Attendees: **Kaitlin Wilson** (WMAC NS staff), **Allison Thompson** (WMAC NS staff), **Lindsay Staples** (WMAC NS Chair), **Michelle Gruben** (IGC Alternate), **Danny C. Gordon** (IGC Representative), **Dave Tavares** (Parks Canada), **Tyler Kuhn** (Yukon Government), **Billy Archie** (IGC Representative), **Mike Suitor** (Yukon Government), **Stephanie Muckenheim** (Yukon Government)

Meeting called to order at 9:20am.

Opening Comments

Billy asked how restrictions are affecting field work and planning. This will be added to the agenda under member reports

Motion 2020-04-01 to accept the agenda as amended – Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Danny C. Gordon

Minutes

There were four sets of minutes for review:

- November Quarterly meeting minutes
 - Amend minutes to reflect that hunters are seeing smaller bears everywhere, not just around Aklavik.
 - p7/8 why did IRC request the removal of Aklavik from language around benefits in the WCMP? Lindsay provided context for IRC suggested amendments to the WCMP
 - p12 are caribou eating blueberries too? Danny confirmed that it is blueberries AND akpiks
- November Joint AHTC meeting minutes
 - Can we expand bird song research to reflect the type of work that has occurred through other projects? Dave noted that he has flagged historical datasets with his colleague
- February 10th meeting minutes
 - It was noted that there is an interest in future work looking at predation impacts on caribou
- March 26th meeting minutes
 - No comments from Council on meeting minutes

Motion 2020-04-02 to accept the November quarterly meeting minutes as amended – Moved by Billy Archie, seconded by Tyler Kuhn

Motion 2020-04-03 to adopt the November 27, 2019 AHTC and WMAC (NS) joint meeting record – Moved by Danny C. Gordon, seconded by Tyler Kuhn

Motion 2020-04-04 to accept the February 10, 2020 WCMP meeting record as amended – Moved by Dave Tavares, seconded by Billy Archie

Motion 2020-04-05 to accept the March 26, 2020 finance meeting record as amended – Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Billy Archie

Action Item 2020-04-01 Staff and Jen Smith will work with Billy Storr on reporting back to AHTC and ACC on the February 10th WCMP meeting and other meetings he has attended as an Aklavik representative.

Action Items

Kaitlin provided an overview of the updated action items. No comments were made.

Chair Report

The Chair's verbal report covered:

- The most recent Joint Secretariat Board meeting (there is a new executive director, revising the personnel policy, travel policy, harassment policy)
 - WMAC (NS) will be looking at how to align its own personnel policy with the Joint Secretariat's policies. The JS has retained a consultant to modernize its personnel policy and will cover the costs of these consulting services to assist the WMAC(NS) in updating its policy.
 - The JS board is working to equalize the board member honoraria rates across committees, including Inuvialuit members and board Chairs
- A summary of the Makivik court case regarding application of Inuit knowledge of polar bear in decision making (especially quota setting). The initial court decision came down about a year ago. Makivik is now considering an appeal on the grounds that the Minister did not assign appropriate weight to Inuit traditional knowledge in assigning a quota allocation.
 - While Makivik would like other Inuit groups (including Inuvialuit) to act as interveners in an appeal; Lindsay has spoken to Kate Darling about the situation and was informed that IRC is reticent to join the Makivik appeal as it could put them at odds with other Inuit regional groups who may be adversely affected if the appeal results in a re-allocation of the harvest quota across the affected regions who share the population.

Correspondences

Allison went through the summary of correspondences (summary included in the meeting package).

Dave confirmed that the Minister has granted a one-year extension for him to continue on as the federal representative on the Council.

Member Reports

Dave:

Colleen Arnison has been appointed to the position Dave vacated in Inuvik. Dave will no longer be speaking on behalf of the Ivvavik projects; staff will liaise with Parks staff in Inuvik more frequently.

Dave provided a table of work plan initiatives for Ivvavik (included in the meeting package). All of the projects are linked to existing plans and priorities and have been discussed with Council in the past.

Parks Canada is now considering which resource conservation projects can proceed and which will be deferred/cancelled. No update yet about what will happen from May onwards.

Breeding bird autonomous recording survey - two years of data have been analyzed. These results are now being compared to past studies to assess potential decline.

- Danny: Presentation on bird breeding and population, inland and along the coast, would be beneficial

Would the Council be interested in a detailed presentation on the cultural resource management work in Ivvavik? The project lead will be leaving to do a PhD in the fall, so ideally the Council would receive this presentation before then.

Action Item 2020-04-02 Dave to follow up with staff regarding Parks presentations to the community and Council on major projects.

Tyler:

Yukon Parks has closed all parks for the time being. No permits are being issued for research. It is not expected that there will be any operations, including with the Rangers or Parks staff this summer. The camp will not be set up at Qikiqtaruk. The Arctic cruise ship season is cancelled for the year.

The IFA research project on Herschel Island, proposed by Cameron Eckert and supported by the Council, will be cancelled for this season.

Billy

Billy attended the ISR shipping workshop. His meeting summary is included in the meeting package. How are cruise ship permits dealt with through YG? (YG was not at the ISR shipping workshop due to a late invite).

Action Item 2020-04-03 Staff will circulate shipping workshop notes to Tyler.

Action Item 2020-04-04 Tyler will follow up with colleagues on the YG permitting process for cruise ships within and outside of Herschel Island.

Mike

Mike provided an update, which is in the meeting package.

Polar bear

- The 2020 field season has been cancelled due to covid-19
- Billy expressed an interest in seeing genetic information from polar bears that feed at bowhead bone piles in the analysis for the population estimate.
- There is a draft paper that summarizes the 2017 polar bear survey work.

Action Item 2020-04-05 Mike will share the draft paper on the 2017 polar bear work with the Council.

Muskox

- Polar Knowledge Funding Application response has been delayed for months (still waiting)
- First rigorous estimate of the population was planned (previous work has been a minimum count), but was cancelled due to covid-19. The funds will be carried over to next year, but many of the collars will fall off in the next few months making the planned approach difficult

- COSEWIC assessment of muskox has been delayed
- Laurence Carter has been hired by the GRRB (likely starting end of summer), but her muskox thesis work has been progressing and results are expected throughout the summer. Early results are included in the meeting package
- What does Laurence's work say about caribou/muskox interactions, especially about caribou fearing muskox?
 - Following up on the direct observations of caribou fearing muskox was not highlighted as a priority during research planning, so cannot directly compare Laurence's work to past observations
 - What Laurence's work is revealing is that muskox may be in similar locations, but the actual species they are foraging is very different and are not seeing overlap. This is an indication that they are not competing for food
 - Right now, not seeing a fairly significant impact of where muskox are on caribou migration (but analysis not complete)
- Laurence may be able to present her work to the Council in the future
- Danny - how many kill site locations do you have for wolves/bears/wolverine killing muskox?
 - Handful on Yukon North Slope, typically April and early May; we may be missing many events because of observation bias
 - In Alaska folks have focused on this question and have seen significant predation on muskox from grizzly bears
 - Unsure of wolf predation but have heard observations of injury on muskox backs, could be from wolves or mating-related injuries
- What are muskox harvest numbers? Appears to be 13-15 per year, but varies. Not comprehensively covered in the Inuvialuit harvest study.

Porcupine Caribou

- Habitat study (deploying collars) completed on Alaskan side, collar monitoring, collection of camera collars mostly complete, scat collection is planned for summer to look at diet
- Good footage from the camera collars
- The habitat work has continued with Ellie Gurarie. They have built resource selection functions for each year. Interesting findings include: starting to understand some of the drivers of why caribou select different habitats year-over-year, as it relates to habitat change on the Eastern Yukon North Slope.

PCH TK Project

- Trailmark has all of Vuntut's data, still processing; all GTC data has been integrated into the system; NND doesn't have much in a format that is useable; TH similar
- Kait and Allison working with Kelly on transferring Inuvialuit data
- Analysis of the TK data slated to start this fall
- PCMB received funding (2-3 years) for data analysis and chapter writing to support development of the conservation plan.

Field work

- Almost all cancelled; the only priority for the summer is pellet collection.
- There is an interest in doing wolf predation work eventually; will work with partners on how to design this type of work.

Stephanie:

- Unspent funding in Yukon's IFA implementation budget should be able to be carried over given the inability to conduct research safely at this time.
- Stephanie will keep the Council apprised throughout the year if a large carry forward is expected.
- Mike also noted that he will bring forward to Council any future proposals for additional work that could use 'surplus' funding.

- Yukon is still working toward a new multi-year IFA implementation funding agreement with Canada, but in the meantime the funding still flows under the existing multi-year agreement.

Staff Reports

Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

- Kaitlin provided an overview of her briefing note on the wolf conservation and management plan
- IGC directed WMAC (NS) to be the main contact on this file.

Yukon North Slope Conference

- Postponed indefinitely; future plans will depend on conversations with the Inuvialuit

PCMB TK project

- Staff are working with Kelly on developing a data sharing agreement that will work for IGC and Aklavik HTC

Polar bear

- Allison summarized the briefing note on polar bear
- Disagreement with the PBSG position on populations, correspondences have been sent in both directions
- What is the risk to polar bears that might eat an unhealthy/diseased bowhead whale that has washed up on the beach? North Slope Borough in Alaska are doing work on polar bear health and disease - staff will follow up for more information

Action Item 2020-04-06 Staff will follow up with Raphaela Stimmelmayer at the North Slope Borough for more information on the risk of disease transfer to polar bears from unhealthy whales and seals.

Decision Items

PCH Collaring - YG

- Council Chair recommends deferring this recommendation until the IGC responds to the AHTC rescinding the original motion to not support collaring of the PCH
- Billy agrees with deferring and waiting to hear from IGC
- Danny disagrees with how the special meeting on the collaring issue proceeded and feels that there was inappropriate interference. Danny thinks there should be a more community-driven decision on collaring.
- Mike summarized the outcomes of the Porcupine Caribou Harvest Meeting
- YG may be able to get the population estimate safely this field season; fecal collection is likely possible; YG will need to know by late summer about the collaring aspect of research
- There is still interest in a collaring workshop in Aklavik once gatherings are allowed - it must be planned with great care

Action item 2020-04-07 Staff will request a copy of the PCMB response letter to IGC about collaring of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Action item 2020-04-08 WMAC (NS) will draft a letter to IGC requesting an update on their December 2019 motion supporting Aklavik's no-collaring motion.

Action item 2020-04-09 WMAC (NS) staff work with members, Mike Sutor, PCMB on developing a proposal for a collaring workshop in Aklavik.

Discussion Items

Qikiqtaruk work plan

- Covered under Tyler's update

WCMP/IPCA

- Meeting of Parties was held March 3rd, 2020 – it was a fruitful meeting
- WCMP revisions suggested at that meeting were focused on the Implementation section of the plan, including triggers that would warrant revising the WCMP
- IPCA - Canada & Yukon interested, awaiting indication of interest from Inuvialuit
- Tyler will share YG comments on the notes from the Meeting of the Parties; YG does not see the need for another meeting of the Parties
- Canada is comfortable with WCMP and don't see a need for an additional meeting
- Clarity from IRC on their stance is desired; the next step is to wait on IRC to indicate their willingness to continue participating.
- Decoupling plan feedback and IPCA discussion may be valuable in terms of meeting WCMP deadlines
- Based on all the work done for the WCMP and IPCA so far (especially the legal work provided by John Donihee and associates), it seems likely that the Eastern Yukon North Slope could be included in calculations for Canada's land-based conservation efforts - but no decision has been made
- What does YG need from Council or Inuvialuit in order to move ahead with counting the EYNS as an OECM? It may actually be in Canada's court - Canada could prompt the discussion with a letter to the Parties. Council will wait to see IRC's response to IPCA first.

Round River Work

- Staff discussed the briefing note covering all of the Round River projects. Staff will add additional considerations to the briefing note based on items that just recently were received.
- Council requested to take 6 weeks to review all of the items from Round River.

Upcoming Meetings

Suggestion for more frequent, but shorter (half-day max), calls for the Council to discuss certain issues. Council is in support of this approach. Next meeting will be May 28, 2020.

Motion 2020-04-06 to adjourn the meeting. Moved by Tyler Kuhn, seconded by Billy Archie.



Lindsay Staples

Lindsay Staples, WMAC (North Slope) Chair

July 14, 2020

Date

Allison Thompson

Allison Thompson, Staff

July 14, 2020

Date