



RESPONSE TO
“A REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE ARCTIC BORDERLANDS
ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE CO-OP’S COMMUNITY MONITORING
PROGRAM DATABASE”

October, 2008.

Introduction

In November 2007, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) (“WMAC (NS)” or “the Council”) commissioned an independent review of the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op’s (ABEKC) community monitoring program database and the quality of information in the database collected from the community of Aklavik, NWT.

The Council has an interest in the ABEKC’s community monitoring program and the contribution it can make to ecological monitoring on the Yukon North Slope. Over the past ten years the ABEKC has been conducting community-based interviews in order to monitor and record changes observed by Aklavik Inuvialuit on the land. After ten years with ABEKC’s monitoring work serving as a well known and important ecological monitoring program on the Yukon North Slope and in adjacent areas in Alaska, Yukon and the Northwest Territories, the Council undertook a review of the database to accomplish several basic purposes:

- (a) generate select data outputs that could be analyzed and communicated to the community of Aklavik;
- (b) evaluate data management and access for the Council;
- (c) analyze the quality of data outputs; and,
- (d) review the analysis of the data outputs and consider their potential contribution to the Council’s wildlife management decisions.

The first three of these were addressed in an independent review for the Council which assessed the utility of the database, the effectiveness and ease of extracting information from it, and the quality of the information that could be extracted. The results of the review were written up in a report entitled *A Review and Discussion of the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op’s Community Monitoring Program Database* by Wayne Wysocki of Symbion Consultants of Winnipeg. In response to this report, the Council has made a number of recommendations and decisions which affect its own participation in the ABEKC community monitoring program and its plans for the use of data relevant to ecological monitoring on the Yukon North Slope.

Decisions and Recommendations

1. The Council accepts the findings of the Wysocki Report: “A Review and Discussion of the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op’s Community Monitoring Program Database”.
2. The Wysocki review of the Arctic Borderlands database focused on non-spatial data because the work of obtaining spatial data (mapped information) would have added complexity and increased costs to the review. However, spatial data outputs remain important for the interpretation of non-spatial data. Given the technical challenges of accessing and generating data outputs, and the current availability of trained personnel to carryout this exercise, the Council attaches a high priority to contracting

the appropriate personnel to: (a) generate spatial data outputs from the Aklavik community monitoring database which can supplement the non-spatial data from Aklavik for Porcupine caribou, and; (b) analyze the spatial and non-spatial data for Porcupine caribou to generate findings that can potentially inform the management of Porcupine caribou and the utility of the data to do such.

3. On a priority basis, the Council also will identify any additional 10 year data sets for which it seeks spatial and non-spatial data information, and undertake to have that information analyzed and reviewed with the participation of Aklavik representatives.
4. Until points 1 and 2 are completed, and a comprehensive review of the survey questionnaire is conducted by participating Co-op members, supporting future community surveys in Aklavik is not a priority for the Council.
5. Future discussions regarding improvements to data storage and access should include:
 - a. the development of a manual to assist future operators in database maintenance and access; and
 - b. database improvements that clearly link responses to survey questions.
6. Future discussions regarding the community survey should include:
 - a. Clearly defining the needs of data users as they apply to survey questions and vice versa;
 - b. Duplication of information collected from community-based interviews and administrative data sources;
 - c. Consistency in the interviewee population over time;
 - d. Length of the questionnaire;
 - e. Consistency and frequency of questions asked over time;
 - f. Ambiguity in the meaning of questions that contribute directly to errors in interpretation;
 - g. Appropriate use of open and closed questions; and
 - h. Methods for verifying survey observations with the broader community.
7. The Council has undertaken a review of the status, purpose and design of existing monitoring programs that are currently in effect on the Yukon North Slope. This work will be completed by the end of March 2009.
8. The Council will consider convening a workshop in 2009 with interested management bodies and governments to review their respective environmental monitoring requirements for the Yukon North Slope and adjacent areas, and measures to improve the conduct of existing and new monitoring programs in the general area. Background information for the workshop may include the results of points 1, 2 and 6 above.
9. The Council recommends that the ABEKC's 2009 annual gathering devote itself exclusively to a review of the lessons learned from the Co-op's history to date, areas for improvements and measures to accomplish them.