

Porcupine Caribou Management Board Minutes of Meeting

Via Zoom

October 15, 2021

In attendance

Members/Staff

Joe Tetlich, Chair
Robert Charlie, Gwich'in Tribal Council
Billy Storr, Inuvialuit Game Council
Karen Clyde, Government of Yukon
Shannon Stotyn, Government of Canada
Alice McCulley, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
Norman Snowshoe, Government of the Northwest Territories (Alternate)
Kirby Meister, Government of Yukon (Alternate)

Deana Lemke, Executive Director
Matthias Lemke, Assistant

Presenters and Guests

Mike Sutor, Environment Yukon
Reanna Newsome, Environment Yukon
Jennifer Smith, Consultant

Regrets

Dawna Hope, Na-cho Nyäk Dün
Travis Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin

Call to Order

Chair Joe Tetlich called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. and the agenda was reviewed and approved.

***Motion to approve agenda
Moved by Billy Storr
Seconded by Robert Charlie
Carried***

Review Minutes

The minutes of the September 14, 2021 meeting were reviewed and approved.

***Motion to approve minutes of the September 14, 2021 meeting
Moved by Shannon Stotyn
Seconded by Robert Charlie
Carried***

NWT Herd Update

Norman Snowshoe related that, while harvesters have been keeping a lookout for caribou near the Dempster Highway, none have been seen. It has been decided that there will no check station on the highway this fall.

Yukon Herd Update

Mike Sutor shared the most current satellite-collar location map. Most of the herd was near Arctic Village and half of the collars were near the Dalton Highway. He pointed out that it is interesting to get collar data of the PCH interacting with the pipeline.

STEP Johnny Charlie Scholarship Summer Student

Mike Sutor stated that Reanna Newsome, the STEP Johnny Charlie Scholarship summer student is still assisting with various projects in his office as a YG employee. Reanna reported on some of her activities related to her position as summer student for the Johnny Charlie Scholarship and shared a video with highlights of various biology-related activities. Mike noted that efforts are made to get summer students involved in as many aspects of biology and office work as possible. He related that Reanna did a lot of good work this summer and has subsequently been hired until the end of the year.

On behalf of the Board, Joe Tetlichy wished Reanna good luck with her future endeavors.

Canadian Mountain Network

Mike related that approximately \$500,000 in funding has been secured for a collaborative project to establish a “Knowledge Hub” and to hire staff. An Indigenous knowledge coordinator will be hired to work with communities and councils. Mike’s area of interest in this collaboration is focussed on PCH summer habitat. The PCMB is a partner with University of Victoria as primary coordinators of this program.

Deana Lemke noted a position description is currently being drafted for the Indigenous Knowledge Coordinator position.

TK Data Mobilization Project Update – Trailmark

Jennifer Smith provided an overview and update of the history of the project, reminding members that the goal was to consolidate all digitally available TK in order to research various aspects of PCH-related changes over time. The questions focus on the herd’s habitat and food, the range and migration patterns, and changes in local herd management.

Digitally available Inuvialuit, Vuntut Gwitchin and GTC data are being ingested into the database. PCMB and all Parties will have access to their respective data which is secured according to data-sharing agreements. Access to each Party's data can be individually controlled and managed.

After the initial project is completed, the potential exists to add to the database in the future. How the data will be used in the future will be up to PCMB and the Parties who have contributed data.

Trailmark Presentation

Dave King and Peter Evans from Trailmark introduced themselves and related that they, along with other researchers at Trailmark, have been working on the TK mobilization project and the sample data analysis.

Dave explained that analyzing TK means to look at it with the goal of understanding what it has to tell us. He stated that the following presentation will show what types of outputs and summaries can be expected when the project is complete. The report is for demonstration purposes only and was based on a small subset of the available data. It was produced to provide the Board with a sample of the types of information that can be gleaned from the data and how it can be summarized, viewed, and presented.

Dave reiterated that all of the TK is being used in accordance with data-sharing agreements and noted the TK shown today is from publicly available sources.

Three main types of analyses were described: maps, textual (words), and thematic. Dave discussed the steps related to a thematic analysis and displayed some of the outcomes which included "word clouds", "bubble lines", and "terms berries". Additionally, "heat maps" provide a visual representation of the frequency or intensity of certain activities overlaid on an actual map.

Pete reviewed the content of some of the resulting "word clouds" and "heat maps", pointing out that it can be helpful to analyze the text surrounding key words to look for themes, and that location data summarized on maps can identify important areas.

Dave stated that the analytical tools will be even more valuable when analyzing a larger body of transcripts and data. He also reminded the Board that the process of analyzing the TK may show that there is only very little useful data to respond to PCMB's questions.

Pete noted that it is possible that the project will continue to be beneficial for many years to come as the consolidated and curated information will be available for future reference.

It was pointed out that each of the contributing organizations has their own Trailmark account and has the ability to tag and code data either by themselves or in collaboration with Trailmark. There are opportunities to involve community members in adding to and managing the data.

Deana Lemke reminded members that this demonstration was provided at the request of the Board to help set expectations and get a better sense of what can be accomplished via Trailmark.

Billy Storr stated the sample analysis was very interesting and this seems to be just what the Board has been looking for. He said that it is very interesting to see the possibilities for the project and what the data could be used for in the future.

Members provided positive feedback in response to the presentation, stating that they appreciated the visual examples and samples of the data outputs.

Shannon Stotyn felt that this is what the Board needed and that it was nice to see how it worked. She supported the idea of training communities to do their own analysis.

Alice McCulley agreed that it was a very good visual demonstration of what is possible and that there will be even more value to the process once there is more data to analyze.

Robert Charlie expressed commendation for the way the report was presented and stated that he is pleased that the Board now has some idea of how the TK data can be used. In response to a question from Robert about timelines, Deana stated that the plan is still to meet Conservation Plan development timelines in order to include TK in the plan.

Jennifer clarified that the sample analysis included some interpretations of the data. The plan is to work with GTC to verify that these and future interpretations are accurate. Similarly, as a step in the CP development, Trailmark will be presenting results back to communities for verification and to identify gaps.

Mike Sutor noted that once all of the data is available for analysis it is possible that the TK data can help answer questions about changes in the PCH's habitat, for example.

Alice McCulley related that last winter Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in worked with a contractor to create a summary of TK related to caribou. The goal was to look at relationships between people and caribou, ecological relationships related to caribou, how these relationships have changed over time and how to ensure a sustainable future. Some of the TK in the database was contributed by persons who are no longer living; therefore, approval has to be sought before sharing this

data. The contractor also completed a spreadsheet containing information about all archived photos and interviews which will be helpful for future projects.

Government of Yukon – Minister of Environment

Joe Tetlichy welcomed Minister Nils Clarke to the PCMB meeting. Minister Clarke introduced himself and related some of his knowledge about the PCMB and the PCH, also noting his awareness about the most recent challenges and uncertainty regarding oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Joe provided an overview of the PCMB from its inception in 1985 and including various accomplishments and challenges to date. Joe described how the Board's positive relationship with PCH user communities was fostered primarily via the collaborative approach taken to create the Harvest Management Plan. He also explained the background and goal of PCMB's Traditional Knowledge and Conservation Plan projects and how they relate to each other. Joe mentioned the challenges related to the collection of community harvest data and expressed his hopes that this can be improved by ongoing communication and community visits.

In response to Minister Clarke's interest in Yukon Government being able to benefit from PCMB's TK project, Mike Sutor explained that his department does work closely with PCMB and while Yukon Government may not have direct access to the database, he will be able to obtain helpful information through the PCMB.

Deana Lemke replied to Minister Clarke's question about the current status of concerns about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by relating that while the US government is not moving forward with any new activities, it is compelled to follow through on the obligations made under the previous administration. The PCMB recently provided feedback regarding the supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), highlighting deficiencies of the previous EIS.

Joe and several members expressed appreciation for the Minister joining the meeting.

Conservation Plan Update

Jennifer Smith explained that the community engagement phase of the Conservation Plan project is almost ready to begin using virtual methods. Written overviews of the project have been provided to various stakeholder groups, who are now being contacted to coordinate presentations. Additionally, computers which will serve as information kiosks, are being prepared to be deployed in the communities.

In this first phase, the goal is to gather some initial input and direction from communities during the coming winter and then return to hold more targeted workshops. In total, three rounds of engagement are being planned. It is hoped that some in-person community meetings will be possible; otherwise, alternative methods will have to be found.

Deana Lemke related that she has been working with the Dawson RRC to set up a meeting and that she is inviting others to arrange their meetings to include an update from PCMB on their agenda.

Jennifer explained that she plans to conduct some workshops directly with the Board regarding the vision for the CP and the plan's goals, objectives, and recommended actions. Additionally, she noted that assessment tools for cumulative effects need to be identified, discussed and evaluated and that indicators and triggers will need to be defined.

Alice McCulley pointed out that regional land use planning is using up a lot of resources in Dawson at this time and that it would be challenging to plan anything else. She felt that planning for engagement in the new year might be more realistic.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meeting was set for Monday October 25, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Yukon time, via Zoom, solely to discuss PCMB input on the draft Dawson Regional Planning Commission's draft land use plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.