

YUKON FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING
December 7 to 9, 2021
MINUTES
Zoom Video Conference

DAY 1: Tuesday, December 7, 2021 – Regular Meeting

PRESENT: Carl Sidney (Chair), Randy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Cheyenne Bradley, John Burdek, Danny Cresswell, Michelle Dawson-Beattie, Sebastian Jones, Dawn Kisoun, Franklin Patterson Jr., Ken Taylor

REGRETS: Dennis Dickson, Blanche Warrington

STAFF: Graham Van Tighem, Diane Sheldon, Steve Hossack

SUPPORT: Colleen Henry (Minute Taker)

IN ATTENDANCE: David Dickson, Catherine Pinard (Fish and Wildlife, Environment, YG) Matt Clarke (Fish and Wildlife, Environment, YG), Janice Sibbeston (YFWET), Cassandra Wheeler (Alosek RRC), Lawrence Joe, Sandy Johnson (DanKeyi RRC), Tas-Tsi Catholique (WRFN)

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

Carl Sidney welcomed everyone to the meeting. He confirmed quorum. Opening prayer was provided by Randy Taylor.

ADMIN AND FINANCES (TAB 01)

A. AGENDA REVIEW— C. Sidney

Carl Sidney reviewed the agenda. There were no changes or additions.

Motion – 2021-13: That the Board accept the December 7 to 9, 2021 agenda as presented.

Moved by: Ken Taylor

Seconded by: Sebastian Jones

Passed by: Consensus

B. EXECUTIVE REPORT (TAB 02) — G. Van Tighem

Graham Van Tighem reviewed the Executive report provided in meeting kits.

Comments/Discussion:

- The Board will develop a submission on the wetlands policy based on feedback. The Board has been advocating for a policy for many years.

- Q) Where are we at in the process with the wetlands policy? Is this the final round of public consultations? A) The feedback from the fifth roundtable will inform the “What we heard” document which will be sent to First Nations for final review.
 - C) The policy is not a wetland conservation policy but more a how to use wetlands with better care when doing environmental assessments etc. If it doesn’t address the concerns that led to this policy, its not effective.
 - Graham Van Tighem provided an update on the server and the hard-line (Cable) internet service for the office.
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FINANCIAL UPDATE (TAB 03) – D. Sheldon

Diane Sheldon reviewed the variance report to November 30, 2021.

Motion – 2021-14: That the Board accept the variance report as presented.

Moved by: Ken Taylor

Seconded by: Randy Taylor

Passed by: Consensus

There were no comments or questions.

HARVEST UPDATE PRESENTATION — C. Pinard, M. Clarke

Catherine Pinard reviewed the *Harvest Summary and Trends 2015-16 to 2020-21* PowerPoint presentation provided in meeting kits. Topics included: licenses sold; moose harvest; woodland caribou harvest; sheep harvest; grizzly bear harvest; 2020 and 2021 outfitter operations; and outfitter harvest trends 2020 and 2021 versus 2015-2019.

Matt Clarke reviewed licensed harvest trends in Yukon.

Comments/Questions:

- Game Zone 5 & 7 — Catherine will obtain information on sheep harvest in these zones and send it to the Board.
- Deer have tested positive for COVID in Ontario. Is any testing being considered in Yukon?
 - The Animal Health Unit is not testing but is maintaining contact with other jurisdictions. The conservative advice for anyone who is handling deer that is potentially affected is to be cautious and wear a mask. The infection is usually from people to deer.
- Board members requested detailed statistics on where moose and caribou are harvested to focus protection in harvest pressure areas. The information is available in the annual hunting synopsis.
- First Nation subsistence harvest is not included. That must be considered.
 - First Nation harvest is included, but subsistence harvest is not included because the department does not have that data. These aren’t the real harvest numbers, really. If First Nations reported their harvest, the numbers would double or

triple. Matt said the intention here is to look at trends in licensed harvest. This is just the licensed component. When they try to characterize what the total harvest looks like, they typically double the resident component which is likely what harvest would look like. There is some First Nation data available and, from that data, doubling the licensed resident harvest makes sense.

- Moose areal surveys — Results will take several months. The analysis takes time. A reasonable estimate would be six months. The survey areas include Sifton-Miners, Wheaton River, Teslin River, and other areas. These should be available in March 2022.
- Sustainable moose harvest — Looking at the entire moose population in the Yukon and the entire harvest would be ideal. We're not getting to the sustainable harvest level yet in most places, but we're way past the sustainable harvest level south of the Robert Campbell highway while north of there, moose are dying of old age. Effort matched with harvest would be one thing to consider in sustainable moose harvest management.
- Regional harvest trends would help the Board to understand adaptive management changes. If there were an area, game management zone or subzone, or a unit that is under an extra strain, that would be good information for the Board to review in tandem with the adaptive changes to enable greater understanding.
- If we all decide to educate and disperse the pressure, it would be important to be able to say where moose were harvested, but also how much time it took. It would help inform people so they could make their hunting decisions.
 - The slippery slope is offering people the advantage of knowing where to go. Just putting people on permit has not had much effect on moose and caribou herd recovery in southern Yukon.
- It would be nice to know to where there is an increase or decrease in harvest and whether it is potentially linked to COVID.
- First Nation harvest will be challenging. Many refuse to report their harvest. Does anyone have ideas? We're basing estimates off word of mouth or Facebook. This information must come from First Nations. People don't realize how important it is. If they provide this information, it could also be a direct benefit to the First Nation.
 - In 1998, a working group was created with the Board and YG which developed a coordinated harvest monitoring program recommendation report. It explained methods First Nations could use to collect and share information.

CORRESPONDENCE REVIEW TAB (4) – G. Van Tighem

Graham Van Tighem reviewed correspondence to and from the Board. The correspondence and a correspondence list were provided in the meeting kits.

Comments/Questions:

- Letter #9 – Resolution #2019-01 Department of Environment Review — The Board will further discuss this item during Members Time.
- Letter #8 — ATAC Road Agreement — This is an important letter. This didn't follow the process set out in the final agreement in terms of the Board's and RRC's involvement.
- *Yukon Wildlife Act* Amendments —Q) Is there an indication of why First Nations have not yet provided letters of support? Are there differences of opinion on whether it is a good idea to bring the act into conformity? A) The Board hasn't heard negative feedback

and is trying to get on the Leadership agenda. First Nations will be closing their offices soon. More letters may come in over the break and the Board can discuss this again.

- December 1, 2021 — Letter from Manon Moreau regarding sustainable harvest of Yukon's wildlife resources — Graham provided an overview of this letter - late addition .
 - Quota guidelines — Dave Dickson provided an overview of the quota guidelines document development process in the 1990s. They had two meetings in every community. Will the Board do something similar for this new modernized approach? A) The Board has not had a discussion yet but may have further discussion during Members Time.

OCTOBER YFWMB MINUTES (TAB 05) – D. Sheldon

Diane Sheldon reviewed the October minutes provided in the meeting kits.

Motion – 2021-15: That the Board accept the October 19 to 21, 2021 meeting minutes as amended.

Moved by: Ken Taylor

Seconded by: Cheyenne Bradley

Passed by: Consensus

Comments/Questions:

- Michelle Dawson-Beattie confirmed that she was present in person for all three days.
- Carl Sidney will provide a list of corrections to Diane.

YUKON FORUM FISH AND WILDLIFE UPDATE – C. Sidney

Carl Sidney provided a brief update. The Yukon Forum Fish and Wildlife working group meeting has been postponed until spring. The next meeting will be January 27, 2022.

Graham provided an overview of the Yukon Forum Fish and Wildlife scenarios which are close to being finished. At the workshop, everyone will work through the scenarios to help understand mandates and responsibilities and to clarify fish and wildlife management in the territory. It will be a worthwhile exercise. There will likely be three or four workshops.

Copies of the scenarios, an article entitled *Renewing government-to-government relations through shared priorities*, and draft minutes of the Yukon Forum Fish and Wildlife Working Group meetings from November 8 and November 24 were included in meeting kits.

There were no questions or comments.

MEMBERS TIME — IN CAMERA

Motion – 2021-16: That the meeting move in-camera to the end of day.

Moved by: Randy Taylor

Seconded by: Franklin Patterson Jr.

Passed by: Consensus

The discussion was in camera. No minutes were recorded.

DAY 2: Wednesday, December 8, 2021 – Regular Meeting

PRESENT:	Carl Sidney (Chair), Randy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Cheyenne Bradley, John Burdek, Danny Cresswell, Michelle Dawson-Beattie, Sebastian Jones, Dawn Kisoun, Franklin Patterson Jr., Ken Taylor, Blanche Warrington
REGRETS:	Dennis Dickson
STAFF:	Graham Van Tighem, Diane Sheldon, Steve Hossack
SUPPORT:	Colleen Henry (Minute Taker)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Lucile Fressigné, Janice Sibbeston, Dennis Zimmermann, David Dickson

DIET, STRESS LEVEL, POPULATION SIZE OF GRIZZLY/BLACK BEARS IN THE YUKON DNA-BASED METHOD – L. Fressigné

Lucile Fressigné reviewed her PowerPoint presentation. Information included: grizzly bears as an umbrella species; density of the current and historic distribution of grizzly bear in North America; SARA listing as a species of special concern; conservation plan for grizzly bears in Yukon; population estimate in Yukon; black bears in Yukon; preliminary studies in Yukon; study in the Southern Lakes region; challenges; Operation Ursus Research using Scat (OURS) Project 2021; DNA analysis methodology; 2020 pilot study and results; 2021 study results; and project outcomes.

Comments/Questions:

- Q) Have you discussed grizzly bear and polar bear interbreeding? A) Grizzly bear genetically come from polar bear which is why they can mate.
 - It is interesting, but Lucile doesn't work in this area.
- Q) Will you expand to different areas in Yukon?
 - A) Yes. Once technology is solid, she will expand to other areas.
- Q) From samples, how many were black bears and how many were grizzly?
 - A) Can't really tell.
- Q) If there were potential to bring a lab to Yukon, what would it cost?
 - A) Less than \$50,000 for all machinery and tools. Processing samples would be \$1 per sample. This is a cost-effective study.
- Sampling urban areas where there aren't high populations ungulates may skew results in terms of not finding bones and hair in scat.
- Q) How can someone help fund your project? Dave Dickson spends a lot of time on the land and would be a good contact.
 - A) Graham suggested a project proposal or summary with First Nation game guardians for DNA analysis in grizzly bear management units with a link to the Trust for support. This could be done in different regions to get a better sense of the bear population across the Yukon which is in line with the goals of the grizzly bear conservation plan.

- Q) How can I collect and get samples to you?
 - A) People who want to help can contact her through email or on the Facebook page to obtain a kit to collect samples. She purchased a freezer for White River First Nation and provided kits so they could store the samples in the freezer.
- Q) June and July are big soapberry seasons when collections took place. Could that be why there isn't a lot of fur and bones?
 - A) We know they come to feast on berries in September and October and June and July in your area too. People think bears only hunt. She is interested to show what they eat in which season and why.

BOARD/TRUST-DIRECTED CONSERVATION PROJECTS — C. Sidney, G. Van Tighem

Graham Van Tighem provided an overview of past Board/trust-directed conservation projects and potential projects on ungulates, habitat, access management, and positive and negative impacts on other ungulates. He suggested Board members consider the jurisdictions and successes and challenges. He briefly reviewed the *Alsek Moose Management Integrated and Community-Based Recovery Program* presentation. The Alsek ICBMMAP final report, the 2015-17 Wolf Program final report, and a YOA wolf pelt handling program presentation were included in meeting kits.

Carl Sidney discussed predation and the Board's responsibility and mandate, especially from the strategic planning workshop in the summer. One of the biggest issues in Yukon is predation. The Board has funded different wolf programs through YFWET. One of the discussions we were going to have is about the goals for the future. One thing that came up was the Yukon Outfitters Association's wolf program that we funded by the Trust. This issue is not only with wolves, but all predators. Carl Stated that the mandate of Yukon government and First Nations through the final agreements and UFA is to increase populations of fish and wildlife. A possible management tool is to look at more predation control with wolves and bears. Last year, in the Ross River area, there were a lot of cow moose but no calves, however there was an increase in black bears.

Graham Van Tighem reviewed a primer prepared by Dennis Zimmerman for the Trust.

Janice Sibbeston reviewed the policy and procedure for Trust-Initiated projects. She reminded members that the Trust's objective is to use trust funds to restore, enhance, and protect fish, wildlife, and habitat. The trustee's mandate is different from a Board member's.

Comments/Discussion:

- With any wolf program, it is difficult to get the traplines to trap on. The most wolves he caught was 30 and he trapped five lines to get those wolves. Today, you would be lucky to get two lines. The Alsek wolf program was successful, but there were several grizzly bears harvested. By removing wolves, you increase the bear population. You must harvest both.
- What would happen if the trust did a project for five years and targeted an area for intensive trapping? It is nice to provide financial support to trappers, but it's not managing predators. It may get traction with outfitters.

- The YOA project was difficult to defend for an enhancement trust fund project as it is essentially a bounty on wolves. There are way better ways to finance the trapping industry with \$10,000 than to have a bounty on wolves. There is no accountability.
- The RRCs can play a key role in a focused program, much like the Alsek integrated community-based moose management project. That is a good example of a project that brings in the RRCs, community, and First Nations. They know what's needed in a specific area better than anyone and that is their mandate. We can enable them to propose these projects.
- We haven't addressed the question: What management goals are trustees hoping to achieve? That is the fundamental question that we need to address right now. Once we have the goals, we can examine the different tools to achieve those goals.
- Terry Wilkinson also presented a primer. He suggested that all the licensed harvest in the Yukon could potentially be offset, not by indiscriminately trapping individual wolves here and there, but by removing a pack in a particular area. That needs further consideration.
- Years ago, First Nations used to den the wolves and bears. There must be a harvest on predators. Wolves repopulate quickly. If you start a trapping incentive program, or something else, you can't stop. Chisana caribou is an example. First Nations looked after the Chisana caribou 150 years ago and no one is looking after that herd today.
- Are we trying to achieve predator management or ungulate population enhancement? If it's the latter, we need more discussion which would include ATV use and land use issues considerations. There is far more to ungulate enhancement than predators.
- Ungulates have many challenges. It means managing predators and people. There is access. If we don't do something now, the problem will be much bigger down the road. The Alsek moose management program has worked with the active trappers. We need to look at this from all angles. Predator management is key.
- Education must be part of the plan. We need to prepare the public to be against the concept of race to the last moose, caribou etc. That will take good messaging as part of the overall strategy.
- Page 2 of the primer paper, "What could the trust be doing?" There are six examples listed. We could refine the list and put it out as a call for proposals for someone to do the work that is suggested.
- We are dealing with two issues: How do we best accomplishment predator management? How are we going to restore, in the long term, depressed ungulate populations?
- Do we want to do a scattershot thing and talk about moose, elk, etc., or do we focus on the moose which is on everyone's minds? If we narrow our focus, we have a better chance of success. Whatever we learn will be transposable to the next population.
- Caribou is part of the equation. With the Chisana caribou herd, they did a capture program to capture cows and put them in a pen to raise the young to bring calf recruitment back in. The next step will be bringing in animals.
- It is easy to replicate the steps that the US took 50 to 70 years ago by solely focusing on predation and predator control which can have a trophic cascade which results in harm to the ecosystem by removing all the umbrella or apex predators' keystone species. There have been good conversations around focused efforts. That is a strong idea.

- Looking at areas where caribou herds are down and where moose populations are low and not recovering and apply a gamut of specific tools to different problems. We can look at habitat restoration, prescribed burns, regulations, or special management/ORV restricted areas.
- It's not just talking about what we know and what we don't know. It's about directing the trust money to assess the validity of these assumptions so that we can develop an action plan. The idea of getting outside help to help us initiate some of these objectives is good. In the 80s and early 90s people were harvesting moose readily in the Southern Lakes. There were more moose taken in the 80s than in the mid-2000s. The difference was that people were out on the land trapping. It's not happening today. We have easier winters, more rain and moisture today than in the 80s. That can't be bad for the ungulates, things are certainly lusher than before.
- Climate change needs to be considered as well. It is a complicated issue. We need to apply various tools and consider the human element. One recommendation to the Board is to start with research and get an expert who can correlate data to look at what is happening out there and what the public perceptions are. The trust could finance research and bringing in a facilitator for a focus group session.
- There are 10 RRCs. We could start with them.

The call for proposals goes out in the first newspaper in January. The Board could earmark \$180,000 for a trust project. A trust-initiated project outside of the trust process requires full consent of the trust. There will be additional discussion on Day 3.

C.A.S.T. Working Group Update — D. Zimmermann

Dennis Zimmermann reviewed a C.A.S.T. working group proposal for manageable education and outreach initiative to support priorities such as: targeting large vulnerable lake trout for release; single barbless hooks territory-wide; large-bodied and small-bodied lake trout regulation change; stocked lake research and strategy; FEED online course; and North American lake trout symposium in 2023.

Comments/Discussion:

- The budget includes funding for facilitation, research on key messages, interviews for TK, photography, video, branding/design, social media, radio, and newspaper placement, and administration. Approximate budget requirement of \$12,000 has been proposed but it needs further discussion and confirmation.
- Board members to identify priorities including the following:
 - catch and release;
 - fish handling best practices (downriggers);
 - Education and outreach;
 - indigenous harvest rights and perspectives; and
 - Little Atlin regulation change.

MEMBERS TIME — IN CAMERA

Motion – 2021-17: That the meeting move in-camera to the end of day.

Moved by: Sebastian Jones

Seconded by: Ken Taylor

Passed by: Consensus

The discussion was in camera. No minutes were recorded.

DAY 3: Thursday, December 9, 2021 – Regular Meeting

PRESENT: Carl Sidney (Chair), Randy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Cheyenne Bradley, John Burdek, Danny Cresswell, Michelle Dawson-Beattie, Sebastian Jones, Dawn Kisoun, Franklin Patterson Jr., Ken Taylor, Blanche Warrington

REGRETS: Dennis Dickson

STAFF: Graham Van Tighem, Diane Sheldon, Steve Hossack

IN ATTENDANCE: Janice Sibbeston, Dennis Zimmermann, David Dickson,

YUKON FISH AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT TRUST

Refer to the Enhancement Trust minutes.