

Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review
Community Meeting Beaver Creek
February 17, 2011

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The following summary sets out key points discussed at a two hour meeting of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee and community members in Beaver Creek. Major points or themes were also reviewed by the facilitator in an oral summary at the conclusion of the meeting.

The discussion focused on proposed changes to the 1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and current issues associated with Yukon wolf conservation and management.

Management context – roles, responsibilities and current conditions

- WRFN continues to have an important role to play in wolf management
- There is a need to take a broader view of this issue. Programs need to encourage people to get out on the land. If they are on the land they will have a better idea of what is going on. There is a social component to this issue. Western thinking is too limited.
- Changes to the management approach (1992) should include regionalizing the plan.
- These are complex systems and therefore climate needs to be considered in any plans

Management of hunting and trapping of wolves

- There needs to be cooperation between trapline holders and individuals who want to go on those traplines to trap wolves
- Cost is a barrier to trapping (e.g. high gas prices)
- It is very expensive to bring people into the bush (e.g. Boundary Lake) by helicopter
- There are not many active trappers in the community
- WRFN takes the kids out occasionally to teach them about trapping

Management of ungulates

- There may be many reasons why caribou and moose numbers are low but wolves are often targeted as the problem
- Harvest management of ungulates is an important part of any plan
- Bears are thought to have more of an impact on ungulates
- Wolverine are also an important predator
- Suggestion to alternate harvesting pressure over different areas and over time
- Community members are able to harvest moose close to town
- Moose and caribou numbers are stable in the area
- The First Nation wants hunters to check in at their office before going out
- There is pressure from hunters outside the region, especially at Pickhandle Lakes
- When people are successful harvesting moose the news travels quickly and sometimes results in other people coming to hunt
- WRFN has consider pursuing a permit hunt for moose but there is concern about infringing on the rights of WRFN members
- Most hunters are given permission by the First Nation to harvest in the traditional territories
- It would have been good to continue the Chisana caribou capture program longer to see the first calves captured have calves
- WRFN did not use the Chisana caribou herd much previously, the local outfitter did use the Chisana herd
- Since the capture program there have been caribou coming down the mountain which people in the community didn't recall seeing in the past
- Wolves and bears were waiting at Boundary Lake for the caribou release
- Impact of warming (and ice layers) on caribou
- There is a need to educate moose and caribou hunters about not taking the largest bull, etc.

Wolf – human conflict

- Wolves have taken cats in the community
- Concerns about wolves coming into the community have not been raised with WRFN

Conditions for wolf population reduction

- Ethical and controversial aspects of wolf reduction programs was recognized
- Should be managing for healthy wolf populations throughout Yukon
- Intact ecosystems are important.
- There is an interest in bringing back the First Nation interest in traditional denning practices – i.e. reducing wolf populations by removing pups from dens and killing them.

- Suggest a pilot program to reintroduce denning as a management practice. People would be brought out on the land for denning and beaver hunting. The fur can be donated to local sewers.
- It is better to reduce the number of wolves when they are pups and than when they are sub-adults or adults.
- There is a preference to use denning over aerial wolf control.
- There is a considerable amount of money spent on aerial wolf control programs and denning is much more cost effective.
- Consider spaying and neutering pups – may be effective way to address controversial aspect of other wolf reduction programs.
- Need to take a balanced approach to management. Just killing wolves is not balanced.
- Maintain equal numbers of predators and prey – keep in balance
- Rationale for managing wolves – cultural/spiritual reasons
- Wolf reduction programs to date have been too costly

Local and traditional knowledge

- Some local stories about wolves preying on moose were shared
- Ravens, lynx and other scavengers have been observed on wolf kills
- The tradition of denning occurred in spring when people were out beaver hunting
- Beaver hunting is not done in the community anymore because it is not financially practical
- Used to have dogs that were half dog/half wolves and they never caused problems
- Bears used to be killed more often by community members and there were fewer concerns about bears coming near people
- Traditional management was considered effective
- Use cultural approaches to deal with many community issues
- Traditional laws were effective for wildlife management
- Difficult country to get around in
- There is respect in the community for all animals, including wolves
- The temperature is warming and there are fluctuations in temperature