

Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review
Community Meeting Burwash Landing
February 18, 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 Burwash Landing. 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 and responsibilities and current conditions

- Need to keep things in balance so large wolf control programs are not needed.
- Wolf packs are larger than average size (20+ wolves/pack).
- Wolf packs are highly resilient to hunting and trapping pressures.
- Burwash caribou numbers are at a low point.
- Numbers of bears and coyotes are increasing as are the numbers of people on the land.
- There is a need to address locally depressed ungulate populations: caribou and moose.
- Causes for the decline in local moose populations are not clear.
- Address the role of YFNs in the review of Committee recommendations and in the implementation of a revised plan.
- Provide stronger recognition of the role YFN governments as authorities with regard to wolf management.
- Decentralize management authority.
- Management measures and actions should reflect the modest scale of YG, FN and local capacities locally, regionally and territorially.
- A great role in management is required by FNs and RRCs who need a new relationship with YG in wildlife management. A greater local voice and more flexible management approaches to address local conditions are required.
- The role of the YFWMB in implementing the plan should be addressed.
- The role of Kluane Park and protected areas as they affect wolf and ungulate management should be addressed.
- Improved communications and coordination is required between YG, RRCs, and FNs.

- Now is an important time to be collecting TK from Elders, given the wealth of experience currently available.
- The plan needs to reflect changes in culture or practices of local people. Young people don't follow the old culture.

Wolf conservation and management – general approach

- Avoid controversial approaches.
- Trapping is a way to re-establish the original balance.
- Important to manage wolves where local ungulate populations are low or endangered; less important where there are lots of moose.
- The plan should learn from the past history of wolf management.
- Implement a holistic and integrated approach to wolf management. An ecological approach is needed that considers habitat and climate.
- There is a need to study predator-prey relationships in specific areas and the ecological conditions that affect them, including climate and the absence of certain predators (the predator mix).
- Grizzly bear quotas should be reviewed across different game management zones where there are high densities of bears that could be affecting moose numbers.
- Considering the high costs of government-run wolf control programs and the limited results, consider assigning funds to ongoing local, small-scale wolf management initiatives (through trapping) as a substitute (for aerial kills and sterilization).
- The plan should assume an increase in Yukon human population over next 20 years.
- Wildlife issues and opinions in the Yukon are different from the opinions of people down South, and we should manage our wildlife accordingly.
- Plan should not be prescriptive with bag limits and seasons.
- Implement a more localized management approach to address local management problems.
- Compiling and sharing local information and local knowledge across the Yukon is important for local, regional and Yukon-wide management. Currently local and traditional knowledge is underutilized.
- Coordination and cooperation between YG and FNs/RRCs are critical and needs to be improved.

Management of hunting and trapping of wolves

- Denning pups was a traditional method of wolf management, but requires a high amount of local knowledge. There has been a loss of this knowledge because people are not on the land.
- Even without restrictions, trappers would never be able to eliminate all wolves.
- Outfitters should prepare plans for wolf management on their concession that could be shared with the FN and RRC.
- Outfitters could be more active in hunting predators.
- Increased bag limits for wolves are needed by trappers and outfitters.

- There is a perception that grizzly bear numbers have increased; there isn't a strong local harvest.
- Protected areas define and constrain predator management options.
- Wolves, wolverines, bears and lynx are all predators that need to be considered in predator management, including humans.

Incentive

- Currently, trapping is not economically feasible. Trapping wolves demands a lot of effort relative to the financial return.
- Offer trapper incentives to harvest wolves
- Key to wolf management is improving the trapping economy
- Re-assign funds for large-scale aerial reduction programs to local initiatives (including trapping).

Trapline use

- Traplines are seriously underutilized: only four out of ten lines are actively used.
- Trapline underutilization from a number of causes: Not enough young people, lack of interest, lack of knowledge; prohibitive costs relative to financial returns; certification requirements for trainers.
- Trapper training is currently a barrier for individuals who want to trap. These costs should be subsidized.
- Increase trapper education by allowing local instructors to teach trapping courses.
- The role of assistant trappers and access by other skilled trappers to use of concessions should be reviewed to enhance the utilization of traplines.
- Young people could and should be more involved in trapping and outfitter activities, but there are not enough opportunities for them to stay in the community.

Management of ungulates

- There is a need for an improved understanding of moose migratory behaviour.
- The discussion on wolf management should be understood in the context of ungulate enhancement (moose, caribou and sheep).
- Wolves and bears are keeping Burwash moose and caribou populations well below "normal" levels.
- In order to manage wildlife, accurate wildlife counts are required. Population surveys of ungulates and predators (wolves/bears) should be enhanced and could be increased through surveys initiated and shared between KFN and YG.
- Moose habitat could be enhanced with controlled burns and forest management strategies.
- Consider the role of bison as a food supply for wolves.
- Permitted hunts with restrictions on access could raise equity issues that involve rural and Whitehorse-based interests.

Conditions for wolf population reduction

- Rationale for managing wolves
 - Competition for moose and caribou
 - Rebuilding threatened populations
 - Trapping and hunting for cultural reasons
- Greater local cooperation and local participation is needed in programs to reduce wolves.

Education and outreach

- The lack of education and knowledge on wolves and wolf reductions often leads to misinformed public opinions
- Education should target young people and the application of cultural activities and knowledge that will enhance their participation in land-based activities and their decision to stay in rural communities. Wolf management depends on people, and the future of local management depends on young people choosing to live and work in rural communities.