

**Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review**  
**Community Meeting Haines Junction**  
February 28, 2011

**Community:** Fletcher, Davidson, Rothgeb, Scott Donker, Dean Thomas, Rod ?, Doug Makkonen, Shane Oakley, Remie Dionne, Bill Karman, Birch Howard, Fred Brown, Audrey Brown, Claudia Heath, Dave Heath, Agnes MacDonald, Jim Sutton, Chuck Hume, David Dickson, John Trotter, Larry Joe, Russel Osborne, Jacquie Chambers, Linaya Workman, Carol Buzzell, Troy Pretzlaw, Lorne Laroque, Al Biggs, Richard Cherepak, Kyra Chambers, Kelsey Mcphie, Melanie Eckervogt, Natane Primozic, Emma Marin, Rich Clark, Ralph Hotte, Debbie Hotte, Eric Stinson, Lloyd Freese, Rod Blyth, Wade Istchenko, Susan Desjardins, Greg Eikland

**Review Committee:** Wayne Jim, Karen Clyde, Frank Thomas, Doug Larsen, Mark O'Donoghue

**Staff:** Lindsay Staples, Will Young, Michelle Sicotte

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 Haines Junction. 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.

**1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan**

- WCMP sets out series of steps to occur when a wolf reduction plan is contemplated, and this is valuable

**Wolf conservation and management – general approach**

- Community-based management is the best approach to wolf management. Funding should be re-allocated to local/regional management bodies (RRCs, FN governments, etc.).
- More attention should be given to the role that RRCs can play in wolf management, trapping and other wildlife management matters, consistent with the responsibilities assigned to RRC in the UFA.
- There is no wolf problem, but a people problem: not just with hunting, but access and forest fire suppression [no new habitat].
- It's important to make decisions and adapt to changing management circumstances and results; indecision can contribute to worsening management challenges and issues
- There are many small management measures which can be initiated before management conditions become desperate.

- Interest was expressed in having the plan relax restrictive regulations.
- The inherent value of wolves should be recognized and respected.
- In addition to FNs, YG and RRC, Parks Canada has a role in wolf management, particularly with regard to research and information-sharing.

### **Management of hunting and trapping of wolves**

- Trapline underutilization makes it difficult to catch wolves. Trappers need access to trapline concessions.
- Outfitters have an incentive to trap wolves in their concessions to enhance their hunting opportunities.
- CAFN operated a pilot program to snare wolves on four RTCs over a two year period. It worked well. If you want to control wolves to see an increase in calf survival, a community-based program needs a long-term commitment, a coordinated approach and financial support. The approach would target removal in a few select areas that are rotated year-over-year. Trappers will not volunteer their time and commitment, and they require financial support to get organized.
- Average trapper does not have the financial incentive that an outfitter does to snare wolves. Trapping is time consuming and an incentive would be needed to justify the effort, given the low cost returns in wolf pelts.
- How can we manage wolves without a great amount of money? Permits for aircraft hunting were once available in the Yukon, which cost the Government nothing
- Incentives need to be sufficient to justify the effort in trapping wolves.
- Trapping on a local and targeted basis is an important and effective measure for managing wolves.
- Wolf management requires understanding the entire predator system (including wolves, bears, people). A large population of people does not fit well today within the total predator picture.
- Sundry permits have been used in the past for rapid management responses. These and other measures that would provide for justified but timely management actions should be implemented. Local management bodies could respond faster to local concerns and interests than the Fish and Wildlife Branch in Whitehorse.
- There has been no wolf survey since the 1980s on the Haines Road area; and in the Aishihik area since the 1990s.
- Some observed that overall the number of wolves appears to be down historically.
- Some observed that this may be related to the effect of spruce bark beetle infestation in the area: fewer squirrels and other small prey species, fewer furbearers have contributed to fewer wolves.
- A wholistic approach to wolf management is essential.
- Some observed that regulations should be amended to remove seasonal restrictions and bag limits on wolves.

### **Management of ungulates**

- Wolf management is largely ignored over concerns for moose, caribou and sheep.

- Management resources (financial and personnel) should be shifted from elk and bison (introduced species) to moose and caribou.
- It is not clear the wolves are significantly responsible for low moose numbers in the area
- If moose management is the issue, then overall management efforts should concentrate on areas which would benefit people the most – do not manage for the 30,000 moose in the territory, but the 5,000 which are accessible to people.
- Wolf management is only one of the components of moose management, along with better understanding of all mortality factors (predators, all aspects of human harvest), forest succession, access and human disturbance, lack of habitat disturbance and the lack of knowledge on disturbances like spruce bark beetle, disease, etc. A questions that needs addressing is what is truly a sustainable population level?
- Along the Haines Road, a cow season in early 80's (and possibly other factors) greatly reduced moose numbers which have never recovered since. The numbers from the 80's were an artifact of many things that lined up well for moose, and not likely repeatable today without holistic management of the species and its environment).
- 5,000 hunters territory-wide today are taking a lot less game than pre-contact people.
- The value of eating country food (moose, caribou, etc.) and the value of the hunting culture should be better recognized. For many rural people shopping for food at Walmart is a meure of last resort and indicator of a great failure in ungulate management. All other options should be considered first. Conservation includes harvesting.
- Conservation includes harvesting.
- The factors and cause/effect relationship affecting moose population dynamics are poorly understood.
- Moose densities are generally low (some observed that densities are the lowest they have seen and predict a decline to continue).
- Without opportunities for hunting bison, there would be little opportunity for harvesting meat. At the same time, bison are viewed as negatively affecting moose populations. (Problem of bison groupings in moose wintering areas and taking over moose habitat.)
- Bison are displacing moose. Moose are food sources for wolves. Wolves provide food and scraps to other furbearers.. On this basis, bison are indirectly contributing to a poor trapping industry.
- The perception was expressed by a number of individuals that bison have a greater negative impact on moose than wolves.
- There is a need for a bison management plan and an elk management plan.
- Some national parks prescribe burns to enhance habitat. The role of wildfire management and logging strategies should be fully considered in habitat management as it affects ungulates.

### **Conditions for wolf population reduction**

- Sterilization was expensive, but it worked to increase ungulates, and had a longer lasating effect than wolf culls.

- With respect to FN's, sterilization of wolves is equivalent to catch and release fishing. It show a lack of respect for animals.
- Aerial hunting of wolves may still be required as a measure of last resort if ungulate populations are at serious risk of collapse.

### **Education and Outreach**

- Need a better appreciation and knowledge of harvest management and wolf management history and lessons learned (with hindsight) and it should be applied in wildlife management. We tend to ignore the past and the lessons that we could learn from it.
- Teach youth how to hunt and trap and use wolves.
- Information-sharing is important between local and traditional knowledge holders and scientists.