

**Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review**  
**North Yukon Renewable Resources Council Meeting - Old Crow**  
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The following summary sets out key points discussed at a meeting of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee and members of the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council in Old Crow. 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**

- The 1992 plan does not fit the values of today. A new plan should not be bound by the 1992 plan.
- Need to make broad changes to the 1992 plan to address the roles and responsibilities of VGFN and the RRC throughout the plan.

**Management context – roles and responsibilities and current conditions**

- Wolves were surveyed in this area in 1993 and the approximate number of wolves was 675 animals in the Porcupine Caribou range. This survey did not cover this entire Traditional Territory. Past surveys extended to the coast. There are two populations of wolves in the area: the migratory wolves that follow Porcupine caribou, and the sedentary ones that take moose and other ungulates..
- In the Yukon, the general consensus is that there are approximately 4500 to 5000 wolves, but this is a rough number.
- Moose migrate in the area seasonally. They are also seen in places now that they were never seen before.
- Wolves are staying away from the Dempster. Wolves are also staying away from Arctic Village because of deep snow.
- Last year, one trapper observed the moose numbers were very low in an area that nobody hunts. Wolves lowered the moose in this area and then held the numbers down.
- Wolves have brought down a lot of moose in the area. There are no large packs, but small ones (less than 20) and mostly 8 – 10 animals - smaller that they used to be.
- At the Porcupine River and Johnson Creek the wolf packs are large.
- There are few wolves here now, but when the caribou come the wolves return.

- Some wolves eat only moose, while others follow the caribou herds.
- VGG should control their own traditional territory.
- A plan needs to include more traditional and local knowledge.
- Local RRC's perspectives need to be reflected in the plan.
- The plan needs to be flexible.
- Need to address non consumptive values in the plan by defining what those values are.
- Need to give more than lip service to the intrinsic value of wolves.
- Need to take into account climate change.

### **Wolf conservation and management – general approach**

- Must look at the history of the north (and wildlife management) and take this into consideration.
- After all the talk about wolf management there is not much that can be done effectively.
- The Plan should recognize the importance of respect for all animals in the plan, including the moose and caribou. We need to make more effort to manage the people as well. Can't manage nature but can manage people. Need to find a balance.
- Large-scale reductions are not something either the wolf or crow clan would support.
- Need to build in a review process (5-10 years) because we might not get it right.

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

- It is hard to trap wolves. Not a matter of complaint, but trappers must travel some 150 km out of town to trap and this is expensive to travel that far up-river. There are few people in Old Crow that can do it, and even less that can do it well.
- What does it mean to manage wolves - count them? What do we do once we have a number? Does this mean we are reducing the number of wolves? What is this number?
- It really isn't worth trapping wolves here - too much work for too little money, so they aren't trapped.
- Trapping wolves is not a priority even with an incentive
- There were 12 to 15 wolves taken this year and maybe a half dozen taken last year.
- Used to trap further away, but now can't afford it.
- Used to kill the pups when needed, but that won't be done now.
- Since 1992 there have been some good wolf snares, and good wolf snaring workshops – but courses aren't a substitute for trapping.
- There is a lot of money spent on managing animals like moose, but nobody is taking care of the predators. Need wolves on the land, but need to take care of the balance between wolves and predators.

- Good trappers are needed. Consider paying them a bounty if wolf reduction is needed.
- Where there are moose and caribou, there will be wolves and they can be controlled if needed. The Thomas family (in Alaska) trapped and snared wolves very effectively. Have had some success thinning the populations around here, but that family did very well and the animals responded: “In 1932 my father and John Moses went to bluefish with a raft because there were no muskrat on the flats. We found wolf dens there and the bounty was in effect so we killed three pups and kept two as pets. Denning worked in the past, but I don’t see how it could work now” Need to look at the big picture and money is also the issue here. People don’t like trapping wolves because there is no money in it. Believe trappers should be compensated for trapping wolves if they are going to lose money. Less wolves means more moose and caribou.
- Conservation or fur handling incentives are a good idea.
- Need to get trapping specialists who focus on wolves in the communities.
- Talk is easy – skinning wolves 150 miles from town without a place to skin them is hard work.
- Here trappers are greatly limited by how far they have to go.
- Should not be thinking that it is necessary to go 150 miles out of town. Everything is against you with fuel costs, weather, and snow machine breakdown. There are lots of excuses not to trap. If a line has wolves, then set snares. The Old Crow group trapping area is not used much now and it is very large.
- Some incentive could be given if people trap or hunt wolves;
- There are some areas where some families trap, but it’s acceptable to shoot a wolf on someone else’s line.
- Respect has to be a part of management of wolves and all species;

### *Surveys*

- If wolves are not surveyed here, how will good decisions about wolf management be made without the information needed to make good decisions?
- Need to make decisions and any future plans or decision should be based on good information and that will be gathered through surveys.
- Surveying wolves in this area would be a huge undertaking and would be extremely costly. Currently there is no funding available for this type of program.

### **Management of ungulates**

- Before skidoos, people used to take more caribou to feed dogs. Now people take just take what they need.
- Lot of factors affect the numbers of calves born each year, and the numbers change.
- Need to put more effort into managing hunting and less into managing nature.
- Both people and wolves need to hunt – find a balance.

### **Wolf – human conflict**

- Local dogs were killed in years past when the caribou came through: there were 30 – 40 thousand caribou and the wolves followed.
- Wolves hanging around town is not a good thing – ever.
- Conservation Officer should destroy wolves that come into the town. They eat the dogs and this is a problem here.

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

- Won't support wolf kills.
- Aerial reductions may be needed as a last resort, if everything else fails.
- Non-lethal control measures are really not cost effective.
- Wolves should be harvested so the moose numbers will return.
- When the 1992 plan was created it came about because there were three wolf control programs. A review of the analysis of past wolf control programs makes it clear that to really manage large numbers of wolves, major wolf reduction programs are required over 10 000 square kilometers to get any kind of success.. Other effective options are limited at best. Doubt as to whether trapping could reverse a serious decline in a species like caribou.
- When the problem becomes a population based one, need to seriously consider options that will encompass large areas to achieve a successful outcome.
- How will public acceptance of wolf control meet up with potential local extinctions of populations of critical animals like Porcupine caribou?
- Appreciate the community perspective and approach (of respect), but will wolf control be considered when low ungulate harvests affect basic needs levels? This cannot be ignored.
- If the wolf population increases, what will be done? What will be done if the caribou numbers crash? How will this plan involve the community? Will the helicopter pilots receive all the money for wolf reduction or will you share the resources with local people who want to protect their herds?