

Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review
Community Meeting Teslin
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The following summary sets out key points discussed at the afternoon open house, an elders tea, and two-hour meeting of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee and community members in Teslin. 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

- The 1992 plan does not keep up with changing times and is a barrier to managing wolves.
- The 1992 plan has not served the community of Teslin well.
- Focused on extreme measures like aerial programs. It is thought that the plan is not designed to work. Most of the plan is a “nuke button”, but there are few wolf management measures that provide for wolf management with a more modest, smaller-scale, ongoing, subtle and community-based approach. The current plan is a heavy, extreme centralized, top-down (Whitehorse-based) approach.
- The old plan took away opportunities for and restricted the abilities of hunters and trappers to manage wolf numbers.

Management context – roles and responsibilities and current conditions

- YG has not been supportive of ideas from the community [to manage wolves and ungulates].
- YG, TRRC and TTC are would-be partners working to incorporate local, traditional and scientific knowledge into wildlife management (as established in the TTC Final Agreement). However this relationship has not been adequately realized.
- YG and the TRRC need a better working relationship.

Wolf conservation and management – general approach

- Effective wolf management, from the community's perspective would include:
 - Greater recognition and enhancement of local jurisdiction (TTC and TRRC).
 - Establishment of a sustainable harvest rate for wolves.
 - Basing management decisions equally on local and traditional and scientific knowledge.
 - Adequate funding to do the job of community-based management.
- “The goal is keeping dogs alive and quite possibly seeing a moose once in a while when you are out hunting.”
- A new plan needs to be forward thinking, adaptable to evolving values or interests, and not cumbersome in order to deal with new issues as they arise .
- The plan needs to be reviewed on a timely basis.
- Subtle management changes and actions would go a long way in improving wolf management.
- The wildlife management regime has changed as a consequence of land claims and self-government agreements and the plan needs to reflect the different roles and responsibilities assigned to YG, FNs, RRCs and communities.
- There is a need for more active wolf management in the region. There is an all (e.g. aerial control, sterilization) or nothing approach to wolf management.
- The community can manage wolves with hunters, trappers and traditional knowledge. The community wants the freedom to try some things (hunting/trapping) on a local level and needs some money to help implement the work.
- The (revised) plan could include sections on each region of the Yukon and current issues and differences
- Need a strategy to deal with forces outside of the Teslin traditional territory (e.g. pressure from Whitehorse-based hunters) – it difficult is to manage wildlife here when the outside considerations are so unknown.
- There are management considerations related to species at risk, etc. that need to be accounted for.
- Concern about inter-jurisdictional wildlife management between Yukon and BC and the lack of coordination and communication to facilitate a coordinated approach to wildlife management in the area

Management of hunting and trapping of wolves

- Teslin submitted three regulation change proposals related to wolf management two years ago – including extending the wolf season, eliminating the 10 dollar seal fee, etc.
- Hunting and trapping is the most popular way to reduce wolves.
- Trapping is not well addressed in the 1992 plan. Enhance the profile of trapping to use the resource and address wolf management objectives.
- Hunting/trapping of wolves is a very different kind of management approach than aerial control.
- Regulations summaries about harvesting wolves are complicated and make it difficult for people to know if they are following the rules.
- People should feel good about getting out on the land and not be worried about getting it “wrong” and the associated enforcement penalties.
- Should change the regs for neck snares to extend season from March 10 to March 31 (and remove the \$10 fee for that period).
- Increase hunting and trapping of wolves in well-hunted lakes, rivers and corridors. This may be accomplished by freeing-up traplines, making licensing easier, etc.
- There seems to be an “all or nothing approach” to wolf management. The community would like to try other approaches focused on hunting and trapping.
- Improve access to wolves for people outside the territory.
- In the Aishihik area, trappers did not trap wolves during the sterilization program.
- YG supports other industries (i.e. mining and exploration), but where is the support for the trapping industry?

Incentive

- TTC has a wolf pelt handling incentive of \$200 for wolves that are hunted and trapped. The purpose of the incentive is to teach people how to properly use the animal and to try to make it as valuable as possible.
- Yukon Outfitters introduced a wolf pelt handling incentive of \$100. This incentive has been increased to \$150. Wolf hunters and trappers in Teslin receive a total of \$350 incentive for hunted and trapped wolves.
- A \$350 incentive is not enough when you consider the time on the line and handling the pelt. Trappers need a real incentive to be out trapping.
- A \$1500 incentive should be considered. If reducing wolf numbers is a priority the incentive needs to reflect that.
- A trapping incentive is much more economical than aerial control.
- YG “Fuel Tax Rebate Program” (reimburses 6.2 cents/litre of fuel for commercial activities) requires too much paperwork and is cumbersome to access. Isn’t being used in Teslin for trappers.

- Any incentive program would have to be well-managed to meet goals and reduce wolves in targeted areas.
- Consider incentives that provides tents or other materials to support trappers.
- Consider the need for local community use of pelts (i.e. local sewers).

Handling

- It is about 4 days of time per wolf for a trapper when you consider trapping and handling.
- Despite incentives, wolves remain very hard to catch. Trapping wolves is a lot of work – going on the line, gas, expenses, snares, bait
- A workshop [February 19] in Teslin showed people how to skin wolves and handle the carcass respectfully, including taking care of lips, paws, ears.
- Trapping wolves is a lot of work. There should be more options for hunters to put out trap sets for wolves

Harvest rate

- The plan should include a sustainable harvest rate for wolves
- Average of 18 – 25 wolves hunted and trapped in the traditional territory.
- Interest in increasing the number of wolves hunted and trapped in the traditional territory. People could be taking more wolves without hurting the resource.
- At the wolf pack dynamics workshop hosted by Alan Baer and Bob Hayes it was noted that 120 – 130 wolves per year are harvested in Yukon – which is about 3% of the population. It was also noted that Yukoners could sustainably take 33% of the wolf population per year as a dispersed harvest. Based on this it follows that Yukoners could be taking a maximum of 1500 wolves throughout the territory without negatively impacting the population.
- Would never reach a harvest of 33% in Yukon

Trapline use

- Trapping as an industry has changed
 - Weekend trapping is only an option if the trap line is not remote.
 - Cost of snow machines (~\$12,000) and traps has increased and are too high to get people out on the land.
 - Changing regulations regarding traps has a cost to trappers.
- Trapping could be an effective way to manage wolves, but is cost-prohibitive.
- Get people out on underutilized traplines to target wolves.
- Traplines owned by individual concession holders should be working with the FN and RRC to allow assistant trappers access to those lines. Allowing access to traplines in the Teslin area for individuals targeting wolves under assistant licenses is under discussion.
- Issue of unused traplines in overlap areas needs to be addressed.

- Trapping is a healthy job and a very good life.
- Hard to get kids out trapping, but later in life, young people return to the community and want to get out on the land.

Management of ungulates

- Moose populations in the Yukon are at a natural low density.
- There is a voluntary moose harvest restriction on TTC citizens.
- Moose hunters should be asked to hunt wolves occasionally. There are many trappers that will help people skin their wolves.
- Local preference remains an issue. Hunting pressure is believed to be coming from Whitehorse. Concern about moose populations close to Whitehorse – Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Carcross, Teslin.
- Need to manage the activities of people. People should not expect to get a moose every year. Harvest should be strictly managed.
- More people are moving into the Yukon so we need to manage proactively.
- Community members value seeing moose, eating moose, having moose on the land.
- Wolves are likely more focused on moose in this area than on caribou.
- The TRRC has not talked about enhancement of ungulate populations. The discussion is restricted to maintaining moose numbers in their natural population range using local, flexible, targeted management.
- Interest in increasing the human harvest of moose populations by removing some of the wolves.
- People are not finding moose like they used to (e.g. hunted for 5 days and didn't see a moose).

Wolf – human conflict

- Wolves have taken 24 dogs in and around the community of Teslin
- Snaring and trapping have worked in the past to deal with wolves taking dogs in the community.
- Snaring is currently occurring around the community, but it is something that needs to be maintained on a regular basis.
- Wolves are a problem in the early winter in Teslin and surrounding area. Extensive snaring early in the winter may be an effective solution. This year the community waited too-long to snare and many dogs were lost.
- Snaring also has the risk of catching dogs though.
- If there was a real problem with wolves, communities would take it upon themselves to reduce numbers.

Conditions for wolf population reduction

- There is no interest in poisoning wolves; poisoning was done locally in the past.

- Aerial wolf control should be reserved for the worst case scenario. It is considered an extreme measure that is too expensive.
- Sterilization is also considered an extreme measure.
- Sterilization would require aerial support – it would be very difficult to effectively pair sterilization with trapping.
- Sterilization is scientific approach; culling of pups is a traditional approach.
- Reduce wolf numbers in areas where people are hunting (e.g. lakes, rivers and corridors in the Nisutlin) vs. spending money in areas where people are not hunting.

Education and Outreach

- There is no opportunity available if someone on a trial-basis wants to try wolf trapping because the trapping industry is based on concessions with limited opportunity for entry.

Other issues raised outside the mandate of the committee:

- Measures to manage bear predation