

Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee

Meeting of Yukon First Nations - Facilitator's Summary

High Country Inn • Whitehorse, Yukon • February 11, 2011

Review Committee

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Participants

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The following summary sets out key points discussed at a one day meeting of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee and participating First Nations. 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. Much of the meeting also reviewed background information and provided an orientation for the review.

Materials discussed and/or tabled at the meeting

- Diagram of Yukon WCMP review process
- *A Review of Wolf Management Programs in Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta and Northwest Territories* (November 2010)
- Summary (PowerPoint) of Russell paper
- *1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*
- Summary of 1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan
- Mayo RRC submission
- Yukon Wolves (Fact Sheet 1)
- The Status of Wolves (Fact Sheet 2)
- Wolves in the Ecosystem (Fact Sheet 3)

The above materials are available at www.yukonwolfplan.ca.

1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

- Language seems outdated and not consistent with a number of management concepts in the Final Agreements.
- Plan is perceived as overly complicated for the purposes of implementation.
- Current plan isn't very effective or practical in the current context.
- Some of the recommendations remain relevant today, but greater attention should be applied to plan implementation and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the plan.

Human use and appreciation of wolves

- YFNs have a special relationship with moose and caribou
- Perceptions and values associated wolves are affected by cultural traditions and practices (e.g. membership in wolf/crow clans).

Management context – roles and responsibilities and current conditions

- Revise the 1992 plan to recognize and harmonize with the jurisdictional authorities, responsibilities and rights that apply to wildlife management, hunting and trapping as established in the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement, First Nations Final Agreements and Self-Government Agreements, with attention to local authorities and responsibilities.
- Recognize the circumstances of unsettled Yukon First Nations without a final agreement and self-government agreement.
- Recognize how unresolved overlap areas between YFNs limit the functioning of RRCs in wildlife management.
- Recognize jurisdictional considerations with Parks Canada along park boundaries.
- Review the following sections of the 1992 Plan and recognize the authorities and jurisdiction of FN governments and rights of FN people: 6.0, 6.5, 7.6, 9.2, 9.3, 9.3.6.7, 9.3.7. as well as general implications for YFNs implementation funding.
- Revise the 1992 Plan to address: whether ungulate population stability is possible or realistic without a continuous, ongoing wolf reduction program; the reference to “other subsistence users” in 9.3.7;
- Recognize traditional knowledge and the assigning of equal weight to traditional knowledge in management decisions.
- A new plan should enable regional TK methods of wolf management.
- Consider the draft predator management plan of the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee in formulating plan recommendations.

Wolves in the Yukon

- Views on wolves are affected by the status of prey populations (e.g. Porcupine caribou herd)

Wolf conservation and management – general approach

- Plan recommendations should focus on community-based approaches.
- BC/Yukon transboundary issues present challenges for wolf management and research.
- Improve information (better use of local and traditional knowledge; enhanced resources for wildlife surveys, better information sharing).
- Wolf management issues should be approached on a small-scale, local and targeted basis.
- Need to maintain an overall healthy ecosystem.

Management of hunting and trapping of wolves

- Trapping incentives and assistance and harvester support programs are needed to overcome the prohibitive costs associated with trapping and having active First Nations harvesters on the land. Assistance is needed to ensure that trappers have proper gear.
- TTC currently offers a wolf pelt handling incentive program which provides up to \$200/pelt. The incentive is for wolves that are hunted or trapped and the animal must be skinned, stretched, dried and sealed to qualify.
- Need for local workshops in each community to engage trappers in wolf management and ongoing trapper education (eg. KFN/RRC, CTFN and TTC snare workshops).
- Auxillary trappers programs could provide support for Elders (CTFN).
- Modify traditional laws to meet new standards (e.g. consider implementing traditional “pupping” practices to reduce wolf numbers).(WRFN)
- Wolf reduction initiatives are in effect on a localized basis for some FNs through the efforts of a few individual trappers.
- Territory-wide fur strategies may not be as effective as ones that meet the specific requirements of individual communities. Trapper training programs may be more effective if they are First Nations-specific.
- Trapping should be recognized as a lifestyle and a wolf management measure, not a living.

Management of ungulates

- Any large-scale management plan must seriously address ecosystem health and function: need for evaluating habitat if ungulates are in decline and long-term productivity is affected (by factors such as food and weather)
- Recognize that large-scale population fluctuations may be weather-related.
- Voluntary harvest management restrictions have been implemented in some cases in order to study ungulates and the effect of harvest pressure on local populations.
- The effect of deer, elk and bison on ungulate and wolf management requires more attention.
- Need to anticipate and address the likely increase in harvest pressure resulting from a population “boom” in the Yukon, and specifically the impacts of increasing harvest pressure from Whitehorse hunters on rural resident and FN hunters.

Management of habitat

- Concern was expressed about increased access to traditional hunting areas that will increase hunting pressure at the expense of local harvesters.
- Habitat protection is a concern for some FNs, especially in light of mineral-staking “rush”

Wolf – human conflict

- Protection of public safety and property concerns exist in Carcross/Tagish, Teslin, Mayo. Wolves around communities are becoming habituated.

Conditions for wolf reduction

- Aishihik and Kluane wolf reduction programs were effective in increasing ungulates numbers, but wolves rebounded quickly at the end of the programs. Any future programs must be consistent and continues over an extended period of time.