



Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board

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GRRB TELECONFERENCE MINUTES December 17, 2015 10:30 AM MST (NT) / 9:30 AM PST (YT)

Attendance

- GRRB office: Amy Amos (Staff), Kristen Callaghan (Staff)
- On call: Eugene Pascal (Chair), Doug Doan (Member), Burt Hunt (Member), Ron Allen (Alternate Member), Bobbie Jo Greenland Morgan (Member), Tsatsiye Catholique (GTC)

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Eugene Pascal at 10:37 AM.

2. Conflict

Conflict can be declared as it arises.

3. Agenda

Motion # GRRB 2015-44	To approve the December 17, 2015 teleconference agenda
Moved by: Bobbie Jo Greenland Morgan	Seconded by: Doug Doan
All in favour.	Motion carried.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the November 17-18, 2015 Bluenose West Caribou Herd Collaborative Meeting were presented for approval.

Discussion:

Bobbie Jo Greenland Morgan brought up several points for discussion and clarification. Kristen Callaghan admitted some confusion to the agreement and decisions from the meeting reflected at the end of the minutes. Board members on the call agreed with her statement and expressed concern. The minutes will be shared with the other two Boards. Kristen suggested that the section be flagged as confusing.

Decision:

Members agreed to support the minutes after accepting some revisions.

Action(s):

- Kristen Callaghan to make corrections noted by Bobbie Jo and to flag end section of minutes as 'confusing' and require other readers to review this section carefully.

5. Herd Status

a. Presentation

Kristen Callaghan presented on herd status for Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West caribou. The presentation she gave to RRCs is included in the meeting binder. She gave a similar presentation to the GRRB in October 2015.

Information shared with the RRCs included the range of the herds, the reason why they are there, management plan and approval, and action plans drawn from the management plan. Kristen explained the colour zones and how they relate to herd status. She asked for RRC advice on herd status.

Discussion:

Doug Doan expressed interest in the ‘additional information’ that Kristen supplied to the RRCs. Ron Allen observed that the slide discussing tags legislated for harvest needs further clarification around unused tags.

Action(s):

- Kristen Callaghan to clean up the slide discussing tags legislated for harvest. Add not used, even though legislated (tag system).

b. Kristen Callaghan Comment Summary

The Nihtat RRC expressed concerns, but not in writing. Kristen tried to capture her conversation with Allen Firth (Nihtat RRC Coordinator) in writing and invited them to participate in this call.

Cape Bathurst (CB) Herd

The RRCs and Kristen agree with the Red Zone status for this herd. Their major concern was impacts to harvesting. The zone change opens up harvesting in wintering zones that are in red. Conservation actions are required.

The GRRB has closed hunting for CB but is open to Woodland Caribou. Actions in the GSA need to be considered. We could close for all caribou with consultation. Kristen’s suggestions for this herd included putting Boreal Woodland on the tag (but not limiting harvest) to help understand the potential impact to the CB herd. ENR could privately share their current collar information. CB could be subject to seasonal protection and moving closures. Research could be prioritized for this herd as not much information exists – collect pregnancy rates, conditions of recently collared animals.

Bluenose West (BNW) Herd

Kristen explained that the status for this herd is difficult. The population estimate using the Rinvest method is the lowest ever despite larger numbers. Gwichya RRC supports Red status for this herd. Nihtat RRC has concerns with zoning incorrectly. Tetlit RRC supports the Board decision process.

Kristen advised that a Red status would not likely be accepted; she suggested that a Red/Orange status may be possible. ENR’s Rinvest estimate is still preliminary, but could be accepted after the calculations are finalized. Both estimator methods could be used and compared.

There may be harvesting impacts (4% Total Allowable Harvest (TAH)). An Ehdiitat RRC member suggested reducing the number of tags. The original recommendation was supposed to be for 80% bull harvest. Kristen suggested that the Board pay attention to this. Gwichya RRC suggests keeping the 4% TAH but focusing on bulls. Kristen's advice is also to focus on a majority of bulls.

An alternate species focus may lessen impacts on the BNW. Kristen recommended increasing trade and barter. Perhaps the Porcupine caribou (PC) herd to help other communities. She advised that the RRCs be spoken with further.

Increased monitoring was requested by the RRCs. Concerns with parasites have been noted. More information on predators is wanted, especially on wolves. Kristen recommended this research be prioritized, and include pregnancy rates.

A summary of her advice follows:

- Ask how the herd is using the land
- Get information on collared animals
- Prioritize sample collection; ask ENR to prioritize sample processing
- Talk to partners about how to get community monitoring data

Discussion:

The Board had a lengthy discussion around the recommendations then went through them one by one. The decisions made are summarized in the Appendix A attached to these minutes.

Ron Allen initiated a discussion on what would happen if one group were unable to manage harvest and the importance of cooperation.

Eugene Pascal asked for the Board's proposed recommendations. Ron Allen recommended: not adding any new tags; reducing the TAH if possible; challenging all users for accurate harvest information; asking RRCs if they are going to accept and abide by the 4% TAH. He also recommended backing off a little from the majority bull rule to ward off non-compliance, and backing off a bit from the boundaries in the ISR.

Discussion followed about clarifying the GRRBs position and whether the TAH could be lowered. Eugene Pascal pointed out that the GRRB is concerned that changing the estimate will increase harvest; the herd numbers haven't increased enough to handle that.

The GRRB recommends that the ISR management zone IBC/07 be changed back to the original boundaries. Justification for the change needs to be requested in the interest of caribou conservation. Further discussion is required around two issues: how the change was made and the consequences of that change.

The GRRB recommends asking for tags in GBC05 and receiving samples, with no restrictions.

These requests are preliminary, as the estimates are not final:

- No increase to harvest; no support for this until estimates are finalized and there is concern that the existing TAH is not followed

- Encourage a majority bull harvest but do not make it mandatory
- Keep the harvest of alternate species internal for now (PC not commercialized)

Please refer to the tables in Appendix A for more details on the Board’s recommendations.

Motion # GRRB 2015-44	To support the assessment of the Cape Bathurst caribou herd as ‘Red Zone.’
Moved by: Doug Doan All in favour.	Seconded by: Bobbie Jo Greenland Morgan Motion carried.

Motion # GRRB 2015-45	To support the assessment of the Bluenose West caribou herd as ‘Red/Orange Zone.’
Moved by: Doug Doan All in favour.	Seconded by: Burt Hunt Motion carried.

6. BNW and CB Zone Changes

This agenda item was addressed during item 5 above.

7. Other Business

A letter needs to be circulated to ENR regarding herd status for Bluenose West and Cape Bathurst caribou

Action(s):

- Send letter out to ENR regarding herd status as above
- Send info after ACCWM call

8. Adjourn

Motion # GRRB 2015-46	To adjourn the meeting at 1:36pm
Moved by: Burt Hunt All in favour.	Seconded by: Doug Doan Motion carried.

APPENDIX A: GRRB RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAPE BATHURST & BLUENOSE WEST CARIBOU

CAPE BATHURST	
Herd Status	Motion #15-45: To support the herd status of Cape Bathurst as red zone
Harvesting Impacts	<p>Zone change: Express concerns with the change of the ISR management zone I/BC/07</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the process in which the change happened (without notification to the GRRB or the ACCWM). Note the GCLCA outlines rights to the Gwich'in for the traditional range of the bluenose caribou. 2. the change itself has conservation implications for the CB. It opens up legal harvest using BNW tags, to the CB fall, winter and sprint core areas <p>Request what the conservation justification is for this change Request support for the zone to be moved back to original boundaries</p>
	<p>Mandatory reporting in G/BC/05: Recommend mandatory reporting of all harvested caribou in G/BC/05 (northern GSA), after consultation with RRCs. No restrictions but all harvesting would need a tag and samples collected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Method: No harvest restrictions. Tag use and samples required for all caribou, giving out boreal woodland tags to Gwich'in harvesters and collecting samples. - Difference from current situation: Currently only woodland caribou can be hunted there, but no mandated reporting, with samples - Justification: Will help us assess impacts to CB caribou, and condition of, and identification to caribou ecotype, of harvested caribou
	<p>Data request: Recommend request to ENR of current and ongoing collar locations of CB animals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justification: The private information about range and movement patterns (also a monitoring item in the plan) can help to assess impacts of closures, and could make possible the potential for seasonal closures as management actions, as in Yukon to protect the Hart River animals, or a moving closure as proposed for BNE animals by ENR in southern NWT.
	<p>Education request: Recommend urgent education actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CB herd status and core range, as well as BNW status and range - How to tell boreal woodland caribou apart from barren ground using appearance and behavior - Cautions about use of BNW tags or hunters harvesting boreal woodland in CB range
Lack of up to date monitoring information	<p>Research: Prioritize specific research for ENR to pursue in the coming fiscal years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment and productivity, including cow pregnancy rates, would be helpful, although cow mortality is needed to interpret recruitment and composition surveys.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An understanding of disease and parasite levels would be helpful <p>Caribou condition reports: Request ENR reports of condition of recently collared caribou in the CB herds</p> <p>Processing of samples: Request ENR prioritize processing of samples collected from collared CB caribou to add to understanding of this herd</p> <p>Predator: Consider options for predator research and potential management action, as called for in the management plan</p> <p>Community monitoring: Discuss with partners how to obtain community monitoring information for a herd in the red zone, when harvest is closed.</p>
BLUENOSE WEST	
Herd Status	Motion #15-46: To support the herd status of Bluenose West as red/orange zone
Management actions	<p>Additional management actions that provide more conservative protections for this herd should be considered in order to assist the herd in recovering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Justification: herd is not recovering as a result of management actions to date.
Population estimate (Lincoln-Peterson vs Rivist)	<p>Acknowledge general support for using the Rivist method BUT express concerns with timing of switching methods given all the indicators of the herd not recovering and conservation consequences relating to that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Express concerns that Rivist estimates are preliminary - Express concerns that both Lincoln-Peterson and Rivist reveal the lowest population estimates ever seen, if you compare to previous surveys using the same method - Express concerns from the RRCs of implications (increased tag use) of switching to the Rivist numbers immediately <p>Compromise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If Rivist method is adopted, make acceptance conditional upon finalization of the estimates and with sufficient time to review the Rivist method - If stay with LP method, encourage the strongest precautionary approach for this herd, using the LP information until such time as agreement can be reached on actions taken with the new population information. - Either way, continue to use both methods for comparisons
Harvesting Impacts	<p>4% TAH: Recommend the review of the TAH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Express concerns with any increase in harvest
	<p>Majority bull harvest: Recommend continuing to use 80% voluntary majority bull harvest (as agreed to in 2007) BUT more emphasis on managing it to ensure it is happening!</p>
	<p>Management zones: Recommend moving zone boundaries to more closely reflect the BNW herd range, to increase conservation protections for this herd.</p>
Lack of up to date monitoring information	<p>Research: Prioritize specific research for ENR to pursue in the coming fiscal years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment and productivity, including cow pregnancy rates,

	would be helpful, although cow mortality is needed to interpret recruitment and composition surveys. - An understanding of disease and parasite levels would be helpful
	<u>Caribou condition reports:</u> Request ENR reports of condition of recently collared caribou in the BNW herds
	<u>Sample collection:</u> Prioritize sample collection from all harvesters using BNW tags. Ensure that location information is submitted, particularly to help understand impacts to BNW caribou.
	<u>Processing of samples:</u> Request ENR prioritize processing of samples collected from collared BNW caribou to add to understanding of this herd
	<u>Predator:</u> Consider options for predator research and potential management action, as called for in the management plan
	<u>Community monitoring:</u> Discuss with partners how to obtain community monitoring information for a herd in the red zone, when harvest is closed.