



# Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board Meeting Minutes – Winter Board Meeting

February 7 - 8, 2024

**Board:** Margaret Begg, Burt Hunt, Roger Fraser, Robert Charlie-Tetlich, William Koe, Myra Robertson (virtual)

**Regrets:** Doug Doan, Ron Allen

**Staff:** Leigh-Ann Williams-Jones, Darren Campbell, Jackson Sung Hoon Joo, Steve Andersen

**RRCs:**

Nihtat – no presence

Ehdiihtat – Harry Carmichael

Gwichya Gwich'in – Phillip Blake, George Niditchie Jr.

Tetlit – Laura Nerysoo, Billy Wilson, Richard Wilson

**Others:**

ECC – Norman Snowshoe, Lila Voudrach, Ernie Francis

DFO – Tracy Davison, Rayna Vittrekwa, Ryan Binder

## 1) Introductions

GRRB Chairperson Robert Charlie-Tetlich called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m on February 7, 2024.

Quorum was recognized.

Conflicts of interest are to be declared as they arise.

## 2) Agenda

**Motion GRRB #2024-01**

To approve the agenda as presented.

Moved by: William Koe

Seconded by: Roger Fraser

Motion **CARRIED**

## 3) Minutes

### a) Review & Approval of the Minutes

The minutes from the November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting were provided in the meeting package.



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## **Motion GRRB #2024-02**

To approve the November 28-30, 2023 meeting minutes.

Moved by: Burt Hunt

Seconded by: Margaret Begg

Motion **CARRIED**

## 4) Review of Outstanding Action Items

Table of action items provided in meeting package. Reviewed and no changes to be made. All actions either completed or nearing completion.

Action Item #24-01: Water Agency – Action Item 2A

### **Questions and Comments:**

Roger Fraser asked whether they are getting better at recruitment and hiring local.

## 5) Reports

### **a) Chairperson's Report**

Robert Charlie-Tetlichy provided a verbal update on his activities since the last Board meeting. He attended meetings with ArcticNet and DFO and provided support to the Executive Director. Chair updated Board on CSAS meeting and upcoming planning for Rat River Working Group meeting to be held in Inuvik at end of the month.



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## **b) Members' Reports**

Roundtable updates from board members. Burt Hunt updated the board on the GRRB/DFO meeting held in Winnipeg at the end of January, as well as highlights from the CSAS meeting. Margaret Begg added her comments to the DFO/GRRB meeting discussions and updates.

## **c) Staff Reports**

Staff reports were provided in the meeting binder.

## **6) Agency Updates**

### **a) DFO Fisheries Management**

Sarah Lord presented the DFO update. She introduced the Fisheries Management Technicians, Rayna Vittrekwa and Ryan Binder and provided an overview of the Inuvik department, staff, mandate, main projects and initiatives. Sarah, Ryan and Rayna work under Fisheries Management Operations. The Fisheries Management Marine Conservation Targets Team is now staffed by Kaytlin Cooper. License issuing is the bread and butter of the department.

Vanessa Grandmaison came in 2018 and undertook community engagement in 2020.

Sarah thanked the GRRB for participating in the CSAS meeting in the first quarter. The next CSAS meeting will finish off later in the year. Colin will reach out.

Sarah also provided an update on the Rat River Working Group. Career opportunities were shared with the communities.

Sarah is leaving July 1<sup>st</sup> and will introduce the new hire.

**Questions and Comments:** none

### **b) Government of Northwest Territories, Department of Environment and Climate Change**



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Norman Snowshoe, Ernie Francis, Lila Voudrach and Tracy Davison provided the ECC update. The ECC has had a merger and now there are two divisions: Wildlife & Forest and Lands & Water.

## **Action item GRRB# 24-02: Reach out to Lands & Water division to attend the next Board meeting**

Ernie (Manager of Forests, Inuvik) reported on the regional office, which gets direction from the Legislative Assembly and Indigenous Governments.

Norman Snowshoe provided an update on staffing and recruitment.

Lila Voudrach (Manager of Field Operations) wants to meet with the Executive Director regarding reporting on bears. Hides can be supplied to the GRRB for workshops with the RRCs and ECC. A Trapper Training Workshop was held on December 7 to discuss how to encourage trapping. A Trapping Workshop would provide practical hands-on training. The Take A Kid Trapping Program is under-subscribed. There were three participants in the larger Trapping Mentorship Program and there are plans to increase the intake for that program.

Lila also spoke about natural disaster compensation for flood damage and spills. Lila also presented on public education, schools and trapper training programs.

There is a wolf problem in Fort McPherson; they are taking dogs. The Hamlet is to address the dog issue. There are exclusive rights to wolves; Inuvialuit can only shoot them, not trap them. The Wolf Incentive Program is used to gather pelt samples.

Norman spoke about the Land & Water Division. The Lands Officer position posting closed January 30<sup>th</sup>. For Water, there are three WROs in Inuvik.

There have been 12 spills in the GSA since February 2023 (4 are closed, 8 remain open).



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Ernie gave an update on the Forestry Division. There are 20 free timber permits in the GSA, 1 timber transport permit, 1 commercial permit. There have been 28 wildfires, 23 in the GSA (3 caused by humans). He also went over the permitting process.

## **Questions and comments:**

Q: William Koe asked how much authority the NWT had in the Yukon

A: MOA – need permission

Q: There are lots of young people wanting to trap or live out on the land

A: GRRB should look at working with ECC to facilitate a workshop

Q: Roger Fraser asked if timber permits were free for Indigenous

A: yes, unless commercial.

Q: Margaret Begg commented that they should not come from Leg; are they working with Indigenous co-management Boards?

## **c) Gwich'in Tribal Council**

Nolan Rainville provided the GTC update on the CMB & Guardians Program. March 19 & 20 there is a CC Workshop at Wellness Camp. GRRB is welcome to attend.

GTC plans to hire two new monitors (Land Guardians) in April with support (funding) from Polar Knowledge Canada.

GLR & ARI partnered to develop a training curriculum. ARI will provide drone training, YSI water, Permafrost ID. GTC is to develop Traditional Knowledge into a curriculum and syllabus. They want to collaborate so fish and wildlife are part of the Land Guardian Program.

**Questions and comments:** None



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## 7) RRC & Public Session

**Edihtat RRC** meet the first Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m.

**Gwichya RRC** have been meeting as and when needed since the pandemic. They are hoping to have regular meetings.

**Tetlit RRC** stated that they have been fairly active, meeting the first Wednesday of every month.

### **Questions and comments:**

Q: Ron Allen inquired about fishes being tested on the caribou trail. Whitefish testing needs to continue, they are not seeing any testing being done.

Q: Dene Mapping Information on trails?

Q: CBC 5-6 years ago, COPE tapes from the 60s and 70s digitized and transcribed. Digitize Gwich'in Words About the Land.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m.**



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**Day 2 – GRRB Chairperson Robert Charlie-Tetlichich called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Quorum was recognized.**

**Board:** Margaret Begg, Burt Hunt, Roger Fraser, Robert Charlie-Tetlichich, William Koe, Myra Robertson (virtual)

**Regrets:** Doug Doan, Ron Allen

**Staff:** Leigh-Ann Williams-Jones, Darren Campbell, Jackson Sung Hoon Joo, Steve Andersen

**RRCs:**

Nihtat – no presence

Edihtat – Harry Carmichael

Gwichya Gwich'in – Philip Blake, George Niditchie Jr.

Tetlit – Laura Nerysoo, Billy Wilson (alternate), Richard Wilson, Dougie Wilson

**Others:**

Tracy Davison, Joe Tetlichich, Ernest Vittrekwa, Robert Alexie Sr., Winnie Greenland, Wilbert Firth, Liz Wright, Rosemary Koe, Abe Petersen, Mary Effie Snowshoe

## 8) Research Updates

### a) Rat River Dolly Varden Update & b) Recommendations for Rat River Working Group

*Colin Gallagher, DFO Science presented*

Colin provided an overview of the program, including background and indicators. Fork length of 18" are mainly juveniles, seen also in the seining program. There is a narrow range of ages, with 5 years being the dominant age.

318 char (308 tagged) and 455 greyling were caught over 5 days of seining. The char population estimate in 2022 was approximately 5,227 (recorded by monitors) and 6,200 (estimates from seining program). Stock is low and has been in decline since 2019. The 5% guideline is allowing for an increased catch. This pattern is similar to ISR observations. Expect to see a lot more fish at fish holes in 2024 to confirm an increasing population trend. It might be improving, but still use caution with respect to voluntary harvest.



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Grayling numbers are up from 2022. When char numbers decline, grayling increase (an indicator of char absence).

Colin spoke about a formal report to make sure the data is not a blip.

Copy of the presentation will be provided.

**Questions & Comments: none**

## 9) Wildlife Studies Fund Proposals

### **a) Divii Community-Based Research Project – Monitoring &**

### **b) Divii Community-Based Research Project – Analysis**

*Steve Andersen, GRRB presented*

5 years 1984-2022. \$20,000. Analysis is expensive – hire a consultant.  
12,000-18,000 return.

#### **Questions and comments:**

Q: Roger Fraser noted it was the same trend as seen in caribou.

A: Tracy Davison explained it is likely climate driven due to the Pacific oscillation in Alaska. Our sheep show similar trends to Alaska sheep.

Q: Myra Robertson asked about the long-term monitoring program and the long-term plan for the collected data. There is a new Masters student. Computer software.

A: Edouard Belanger (the previous GRRB Wildlife Biologist) used summer students. It is not consistent and not as detailed as required. There is an AI system that can strip blank photos and identify animals. Students could tag them based on species. The Biologist provides more details. There is two months' worth of data per year.

Q: Mike saw the same trend in Ogilvy. Disease in the mid-2010s. Hard winters the last 2 years.

A: Keep in mind that the graph is the total population, which includes lambs (highly variable)

Q: Richard Wilson asked if Steve had considered using drones





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A: Yes, this is a good idea and it is being considered

## **b) Shifting Ecology of the Richardson Mountains**

*Mike Suitor, Yukon Government presented*

Mike's project is looking at the changing ecology of the Porcupine Caribou summer range and drivers affecting the Porcupine Caribou herd (PCH). These include 1) Moose – populations have increased, due to increased productivity, calf survival, abundance 2) Wolves – and their effect on the PCH and 3) Muskox – AHTC continue to collar in NS.

### **Questions and comments:**

Q: Burt Hunt asked if costs would be decreased by using field cameras or drones

A: These can definitely be used for Moose surveys (10 years between surveys). Tracked through the CBM program. Muskox are tough, they are too spread out over very remote areas and will leave those areas for extended periods of time – so drones and field cameras would be less effective. Muskoxen are also more agitated by drones than by a physical presence. They are already being used for wolves around their denning sites.

## **d) 2024 Post-calving Photo Survey of the Tuktoyaktuk, Cape Bathurst and Bluenose-West Barren-Ground Caribou Herds**

*Tracy Davison, ECC presented*

### **Questions and comments:**

Q: Roger Fraser asked about the harvesting of herds. Outfitters?

A: In 2006 when the population decreased, outfitting and commercial harvesting was banned. Cape Bathurst zones were closed. The GSA had one closed zone for all Barren-ground caribou herds. Past hunting practices showed outfitters took the biggest bulls and cows. It is a different experience than north of Yellowknife. For Cape Bathurst, the biggest challenge is ITH. Bluenose-West there is very low development and human disturbance.

Q: Burt Hunt asked for clarification on gaps in funding

A: There was no need in 2023 due to ECCC funding. It varies from year to year



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## **d) Habitat and Movement of Moose in the Beaufort Delta**

*Tracy Davison, ECC presented*

Tracy spoke about collaring to track movement, habitat use and survival. She referenced the 2000 Moose Management Plan. The current study will fill the gap. The only work done has been aerial surveys (# per 100 square km). The study proposes to collar up to 30 moose in the Delta in March 2025. Tracy will go to the RRCs to confirm their interest.

### **Questions and comments:**

Q: Burt Hunt asked for further funding clarification. The funding total includes GSA from ECC. 14.6% GRRB, 76.7% IFA, 8.7% ECC?

A: The project is not likely to receive ECC funding; moose are not a priority.

Q: Burt mentioned that the topic would come up in Strategic Planning, so maybe ask the RRCs in the room now. Doug Wilson invited Tracy to come present and send the package to the RRCs to discuss.

A: Tracy is planning this, but it needs to be expedited due to funding deadlines.

Q: Roger Fraser asked if moose populations were declining.

A: There are less than were surveyed in 2017, but more than in 2011. The Mackenzie Gas Project is the biggest cause of decline.

Q: William Koe spoke about AK taking a picture of all the moose together. The elders are meeting to discuss plans for next year for moose. Do you see this behaviour in your surveys?

A: Yes. There are challenges with capturing numbers in valleys and mountains.

Q: Philip Blake observed that moose populations are increasing right now while caribou are decreasing. Harvesters are switching to moose so it will be good timing.

Q: Harry mentioned there are lots more now than before and asked if there are any collars now and if they collar bulls or cows.

A: Yes, cows. They only enter NWT in the summer.



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Q: Robert Charlie-Tetlich asked if there were any surveys done in the ISR, harvesting along the Tuk highway

A: Only a small survey in Kugaluk Bay. TK shows more moose moving north. In 2017 there were lots of moose

Q: Robert asked about harvest monitoring in the ISR.

A: They monitor resident moose harvest. IGC harvest study has been lacking, there is only historical data.

Q: Mike suggested a focus on cows due to the focus on population growth.

Q: Roger Fraser asked how moose are collared. Do cow caribou live longer than bulls?

A: Dart & drug. Bulls there is more fighting, rut, etc.

## 8) Research Updates (cont'd)

### c) Long-term hydrological dynamics of the Mackenzie River Basin

*Jen Galloway, Geological Survey of Canada presented*

There are climate change impacts to water quality and quantity. 8 peat cores and 100 vegetation samples have been taken in the GSA.

4 MAC cores were done in 2020 by the GRRB. Sharon and Trevor did a TK study. MACS3 is the only core ombiotropic; only rain fed, indicates atmospheric deposition. Sr – groundwater interaction. Lb – atmospheric depo. Cu – background. Pb/Cu ratio – burning and smelting in the 1920s increased lead into gas then removed. Hg – below guideline for soils increasing over time.

A plain language summary was provided in 2022 and 2024.

Arsenic lake sediment increases with CC. Plant samples show bioaccumulation. Hg - inorganic

**Questions and comments: None**

### d) Proposed Voluntary Protected Area for the Divii lambing grounds

*Steve Andersen, GRRB presented*



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Steve discussed the need for the proposed protected area. This came from work done by Kristi Benson (TK publication on Divii). Around Black Mountain.

## **Questions and comments:**

Q: Burt Hunt asked what the biggest concern was. Is there traffic in those areas?

A: Research projects. Not much human traffic observed in wildlife cameras.

Q: HC is not sure if anyone still hunts Divii, they used to. The last he knew was Ian's boys.

A: Dougie Wilson says they hunt in August and September, but nobody hunts as much.

There was a general consensus to proceed with the process.

Q: William Koe asked if there were any studies around Fort McPherson

A: In the Yukon. Some surveys in 2017 and 2022 in Ivvavik National Park. 2019 in south Richardson.

Q: Myra Robertson expressed interest for higher-level protection. There is lots of funding available for protected areas. Now is a good time federally.

A: It would be useful to have a discussion with Transport Canada about no fly zones

Q: Burt Hunt asked Mike Sutor if the Yukon Government is entertaining any similar actions in the Yukon.

A: They are trying, but it's very hard. There is a push for mineral exploration. Land use planning.

## **e) Northern Mountain Caribou update**

*Darren Campbell, GRRB presented*

Darren requested a motion by the GRRB to approve the Consensus Agreement.

He reported on the Heart and Bonnetplume (formerly Snake) herds. In the Yukon, the Bonnetplume herd was estimated at 5,000 in 1982. The Heart herd was estimated at 3,660 in 2015.



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## Questions and comments:

Q: William Koe suggested Kaytlin Cooper have a meeting on Mountain Caribou

## 9) Wildlife Studies Fund Proposals (cont'd)

### f) Nin Nihlinehch'i' – Li' hàh Guk'àndehtr'inahtii (Animals at Risk – animals we are watching closely)

*Kristi Benson, GTC presented*

There are two phases. 2012-13 grizzly, 2013-14 wolverine, 2014-15 Bluenose caribou, 2016-17 insects, 2022-23 muskrats. For birds, there are 2-4 in-person workshops proposed (fall/winter and spring/summer).

## Questions and comments:

Q: William Koe asked about an interview on muskrats, on land, in town

A: In town

Q: Burt Hunt inquired about ASFAR – fed? Any other funding pots to access?

A: Not really, CIMP is a no

## 8) Research Updates (cont'd)

### f) PCMB Update

*Joe Tetlich, PCMB presented*

Joe provided an update on the caribou. He spoke about support from Mike Sutor. No count since 2015. In 2017 there was a count. Joe gave credit to FMP with promoting leaders, but who are leaders? It is actually the resident herd. Currently there is a little bunch in Fishing Branch and that's it for Canada. The biggest issue is giving data. It is concerning that they are not crossing the Dempster Highway anymore.

## Questions and comments:



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Q: Burt hunt asked about the snowpack in Alaska compared to here

A: No

Q: William Koe asked about fire and how long caribou will stay away

A: How caribou use the habitat varies and it depends upon the degree of burn. In 2004 there was a spotty burn and caribou returned right away. There were enough green patches. In 2019 Horseshoe Bend.

Q: Roger Fraser noted that the Bathurst herd has declined; he saw it in his lifetime. He worked with ENR and tried to find a way to bring the population back up, but it was too late. How do we get the message out to the community?

A: Generally, communities are good at informing their participants. Margaret Begg suggested the RRCs could be helpful in getting information out to hunters. Also in school, education for youth is really helpful.

Q: Philip commented that there are no caribou here, so we can't complete a survey. How do we ensure that Gwich'in still get their piece of pie?

A: Pie only comes in to play when the PCH decreases

Q: Roger Fraser suggested the use of social media to help educate people, a prevention campaign. William Koe mentioned Facebook and a website for PCMB.

A: This communication strategy is working very well, but they are open to suggestions.

Q: William Koe commented he was glad they were over there; if they were on the highway, they would be gone. He highlighted overharvesting issues and trucks.

Q: Mike said that PCMB would like to update GRRB on plans to explore working with the RRCs to get information on areas no longer accessed by caribou.

***External representatives departed. GRRB Board and Staff members remained.***



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**Motion GRRB #2024-03**

To go in-camera at 3:45 p.m.

Moved by: William Koe

Seconded by: Margaret Begg

Motion **CARRIED**

**Motion GRRB #2024-04**

To come out of camera at 4:30 p.m.

Moved by: William Koe

Seconded by: Roger Fraser

Motion **CARRIED**

**Motion GRRB #2024-05**

Whereas the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board has reviewed the DRAFT Consensus Agreement Respecting Implementation of the Management Plan for Northern Mountain Caribou in the NWT (CA) and Appendix A. Now therefore the Board by way of this motion agrees to adopt “in principle” the consensus agreement respecting implementation of the management plan for the northern mountain caribou in the NWT.

Moved by: William Koe

Seconded by: Burt Hunt

Motion **CARRIED**



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## **Motion GRRB #2024-06**

Whereas the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board has reviewed all the 2024/2025 Wildlife Studies (WSF) project applications submitted and presented to the Board. Now therefore the Board by way of this motion agrees to approve the WSF allocation as follows: 1) WSF-01 Kristi Benson - Nin Nihlinehch'y' – Li' hàh Guk'àndehtr'inahtii (Animals at Risk – animals we are watching closely) - Approved for \$12,300; 2) WSF-02 - Tracy Davison - 2024 Post-Calving Photo Survey of the Tuktoyaktuk, Cape Bathurst and Bluenose-West Barren-Grounds Caribou Herds - Approved for \$14,000; 3) WSF-03 -Habitat and Movement of Moose in the Beaufort Delta - Approved for \$30,000 conditional upon RRC support; 4) WSF-04 &WSF-05 - Steve Andersen - Divii (Dall's Sheep) Community-Based Research Project Monitoring and Analysis: Approved for \$18,600; and 5) WSF-06 - Mike Suitor - Shifting Ecology of the Richardson Mountains - Approved for \$25,000.

Moved by: Roger Fraser  
Motion **CARRIED**

Seconded by: Margaret Begg

## **Motion GRRB #2024-07**

Whereas the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board has reviewed the recommendation provided by RBC Dominion Securities for the 2024/2025 fiscal year, for withdrawal from the Board's investment account # 376-24161-17, and whereas the Board has taken into consideration the account's performance and current economic projections when approving funding for the 2024/2025 Wildlife Studies projects. Now therefore the Board by way of this motion agrees to the withdrawal of \$99,900 from the RBC account # 376-24161-17 to fund the 2024/2025 approved Wildlife Studies research projects.

Moved by: Burt Hunt  
Motion **CARRIED**

Seconded by: Roger Fraser

## **Motion GRRB #2024-08**

To appoint Paul Teoh as GRRB Auditor for the 2024/25 fiscal year.

Moved by: Burt Hunt  
Motion **CARRIED**

Seconded by: Roger Fraser





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## 16 a) Set Fall meeting dates

Fall meeting is tentatively set for August 19 in Tsiigehtchic or in September with the new Board. The Research Priority & Strategic Planning meeting will take place in Inuvik afterwards.

## b) Motion to adjourn

### Motion GRRB #2024-09

To adjourn the meeting at 4:50 p.m. on February 8, 2024

Moved by: William Koe

Motion **CARRIED**

Minutes approved August 13th, 2024 (date)

Motion # 2024-34