

Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review
Community Meeting Carcross
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The following summary sets out key points discussed at a four hour meeting of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee and community members in Carcross. 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 focused primarily on conditions and guidelines for initiating (large-scale) wolf control/reduction programs.
- Trapping was missing from the 1992 plan as a management tool.

Management context – roles and responsibilities and current conditions

- It is within the mandate of the RRCs to manage traplines.
- In the new plan the RRC should be a main tool for revitalizing and promoting trapping in communities
- TTC has budgeted funds this year to get people back out on the land to trap and hunt. Community members are able to apply for funding for gas and supplies.
- The Teslin RRC and TTC have built a strong relationship to work on this issue together.
- Wolf management is a very important issue to the community.
- The roles and responsibilities of the First Nations and RRCs need to be recognized in the new plan.
- Parties with a role in implementing the plan need latitude and flexibility to do the work.
- YG should have discussions with counterparts in BC and work towards a more coordinated approach to transboundary wolf management in the area of the Yukon/BC border.
- TK and LK are more proactive than SK
- Equal treatment of LK,TK and SK otherwise it won't work

Wolf conservation and management – general approach

- Large scale wolf control should be a measure of last resort.
- A balanced approach to wolf management is needed which recognizes the importance of trappers.
- Environment Yukon and trappers should be working more closely together to understand what is happening in the region.
- Carcross and Teslin RRCs may work together in some areas of wolf management.
- Partnerships between neighbouring RRCs could be an effective way to work.
- Communities need financial support to try different, localized approaches to wolf management.
- People have a lot of respect for the wolf.
- It takes a long time for community members and government staff to build effective working relationships.
- Subtle differences in management relationships and partnerships can make a big difference in terms of empowering communities in wildlife management generally and wolf management specifically.
- Specific approaches to wolf management should be determined on a regional basis and not prescribed in a wolf management plan because there is great variation in situations across the Yukon.
- The management response time when working with the Yukon government is sometimes too slow. This may worsen management issues. Timely, regional responses to management issues are needed.
- Local, traditional and scientific knowledge need to be used together. Local and traditional knowledge tend to provide for more immediate management responses than scientific knowledge. The importance of proactive vs. reactive approaches to wolf management was highlighted and it was suggested that RRCs and First Nations can be more proactive than the Yukon government which is more reactive to management issues.

Management of hunting and trapping of wolves

- There are many small barriers facing trappers and hunters that add up to large barriers that undermine their capacity and ability to harvest wolves.
- The rules for reporting wolf harvest in Yukon and BC are very different. Yukon is thought to have much more stringent rules for reporting that discourage harvesting.
- Consider revisiting some of the old trapper support programs that were available in the past.
- Efforts to reduce wolf numbers through trapping and hunting should be focused on specific subzones.
- It would be good to have a group of trappers registered and able to go in to target certain areas for wolves. They would have the authority to trap on all lines for wolves only.
- There are people who think that trapping is not ethical. The trapping community would appreciate more support from the government in conflicts with those who do not support trapping.
- Canada is a signatory to the Convention for the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Wolves are listed under Appendix 2 which establishes special attention to their

status and management in jurisdictions that export/trade in wolf pelts. Management of wolves in the Yukon must be aware of international attention.

- There have been situations where trappers have had conflicts with other users (dog walkers, recreationalists, etc.) and it has been difficult to put traps out.
- The cost of trapping is very limiting. It isn't feasible financially to only target wolves. This is especially true for assistant trappers.
- Trapping wolves is very hard work. To be effective at trapping wolves it needs to be a full time job.
- Needs to be a targeted effort.
- Community members should have the opportunity through a community-based program to become registered to trap only wolves.
- The YG trapping course does not teach much about how to trap wolves.
- The trapping course is not the best way to teach people to trap. People learn best out on the land from other experienced trappers. As well as gaining experience through their own work.
- There is concern that the hunting and trapping lifestyle is being lost.
- Wolf seals are a barrier. They are not needed for other animals. Wolf seals are used to demonstrate to other jurisdictions where wolf pelts are exported that Yukon is doing a sound job managing and conserving wolves.
- Assistant trappers are capable but time is still required from more experienced trappers to help them learn.
- Road kill should be given to trappers if the animal is no longer edible. In BC trappers are able to pick up road kill and report it to the government.
- Predator howler can be an effective way to lure wolves.
- Aerial hunting is permitted in Alaska and Alberta.
- The wolf season is too short.
- Trappers need to be able to trap everything when they are out there to make it worthwhile.
- Remove these barriers: increase limit for outfitters; extend season; no sealing fee; reduce reporting frequency (not every time you shot a wolf)

Incentive

- A \$250 incentive would make harvesting wolves worth it
- BC trappers should receive the same incentives as Yukon trappers.
- Considerable government funds and assistance are provided to other sectors of the Yukon economy. More should be spent on the trapping industry.
- The government used to give money for people to upgrade their traplines, build or renovate cabins, or for gas. (e.g. \$7500 for cabin construction; \$3500 for trapline improvement.)
- It would be useful to have people help build snare sets.
- Snare sets are expensive - \$60 each – assistance buying equipment would be helpful.
- Rent a trap or snare
- Need financial help to prove to the international community that we using the best equipment to catch wolves.
- TTC offers an incentive (\$200) for any wolf hunted or trapped in the traditional territory

- YOA offers an incentive (\$150) for trapped wolves, but a receipt that the fur has gone to auction or sold to a buyer must be provided.
- The NWT has a multi-faceted incentive program for trappers that includes a guaranteed minimum fur price and early payout prior to an auction sale. (Trappers are subsequently provided a “top-up” if the fur sale exceeds the minimum price paid out).
- Consider trading old traps for new ones.
- Assistance could be provided to help trappers use the most humane traps. This would help reassure others that the industry in the Yukon is ethical.
- ARDA – Agricultural Rural Development Agent – was a federal program during the late 70s early 80s which provided funds for building and renovating cabins.
- INAC used to have a fuel subsidy and bought traps through the First Nations.
- YG had a fur harvest enhancement program focused on training, buying traps and providing grants to buy snow machines.
- At one time trappers could get a free flight to survey their traplines.
- The current fuel rebate is not worth the time to submit the applications.
- The government funds spent on aerial shooting programs could be better spend funding wolf trapping efforts.

Trapline use

- Trapline access is something the RRC should be working on.
- People need access to vacant and underutilized lines. Getting access to underutilized lines is a complicated issue. People have held those traplines for years and generations and used them for hunting, trapping, living, etc. Trapline holders are afraid they’ll lose their lines. There is a need to have government assure people that if others are using their lines they will not lose them.

Management of ungulates

- Wolves target sheep and caribou in this region.
- Need to get a handle on hunting. Without this wolf management is not effective.

Wolf Human Conflict

- There are no real concerns with wolves in the community of Carcross.
- All Yukon communities should be prepared to deal with wolves coming into town.
- People are hearing lots about dogs being taken in other communities like Teslin and Watson Lake.
- There are concerns about a pack of seven wolves at Bennett Lake. Cabin owners are seeing the animals close to their dwellings. There are concerns for children and tourists in the area. Residents have not experienced this in the past in this area.

Conditions for wolf population reduction

- Large scale wolf control would be a measure of last resort. A population would need to be going extinct, not just low numbers of a population.
- The measure of last resort should be identified and made clear.
- Measures that are currently on the table regarding wolf control are outlined in the 1992 plan.
- Wolf control programs were too expensive.
- Some of the regulations should be relaxed. If large groups of wolves are seen it should be an option to take a plane out and remove them.

Other methods

- Denning was probably an effective method of wolf control at one time
- Denning occurred during the spring beaver hunts
- In the past, denning practices were just between the hunter and the policeman who granted the bounty for wolf pups.
- Denning should be included as a management option for those communities that would practice this traditional method.

Education and outreach

- Many people are uncertain about the rules for hunting and trapping of wolves. These rules need to be clearly communicated to give people comfort that they are working within the law.
- Hunting and trapping should be promoted as a positive lifestyle choice and management option.
- The hunting and trapping community should be advertised to assure the public that trappers are certified and treat animals ethically.
- Teslin RRC has submitted a proposal to the FWMB enhancement trust fund– “Take a Kid Trapping” – to take 10 kids aged 10 – 15 on a trapline for 2 weeks next February. The purpose is to teach kids bush skills, trapping techniques, etc.
- Selkirk First Nation has had a program to take kids on the land which focused on cabin and trail building, hunting and trapping, and using furs for sewing and crafts. The program was very effective.

Other Issues

- Bears are taking moose in the spring but that isn't talked about (in management).
- Bears play a large role during the spring when they are birthing.
- People want to protect the bears but they are a larger predator on moose.
- Bears are an important predator around Carcross.
- It is easy to hunt bears near the community.