

**Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review**  
**Community Meeting – Mayo**  
April 13, 2011

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The following summary sets out key points discussed at the afternoon and evening open house meeting of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Review Committee and community members in Mayo. Points from individual comments and group discussions are summarized below.

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.

In addition, the Mayo Renewable Resources Council distributed a questionnaire and posted questions for meeting participants to respond to. These comments and responses are summarized below as well.

**1992 Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan**

- Too much time has passed (20 years) for the review of the plan and changes to it. A new plan is needed right now to initiate immediate management actions.
- Some of the lethal and non-lethal options for wolf control in 1992 should be ruled-out in 2011 (e.g. poisoning).
- The techniques used in the 80's and 90's to reduce wolf numbers are not acceptable today.
- A plan in 2011 should consider and meet the needs of future generations and should be reviewed and revised as needed on a regular basis (more than once every 20 years).

- The costs associated with the review of the WCMP are warranted: wolf management is an important management issue that needs attention – especially in light of the fact that the Yukon’s wildlife management regime has changed significantly since 1992 as a consequence of the Yukon First Nations Final Agreements and Self-Government Agreements.

**Management context – roles and responsibilities and current conditions**

- Generally, wildlife is not as abundant today as in the past. (eg. perception that ptarmigan numbers have crashed and perception that there are fewer geese and ducks.)
- Perceptions varied with respect to the current abundance of local moose. A number of people observed that moose were more difficult to hunt, that people were getting fewer moose and having to go farther to hunt them successfully. This made hunting moose more expensive.
- General perception that wolves were a factor in reducing the local moose population, especially up the Stewart River. Bears were less of a factor than wolves in affecting local moose and caribou populations.
- Perception that wolf numbers were high in the area. Have viewed as many as 16 – 20 wolves in a pack; one instance cited of 40 wolves in a pack.
- Mining access roads and snow machine trails in the area are corridors for wolves in the region and allow them to travel great distances in a short period of time. Perception that the Mayo power line right-of-way may do the same, if utilized by snow machines.
- Perception that wolves target pregnant cow moose because they are easier to run down.
- Perception by some that wolves have less prey to feed on and wolves are in poorer condition.
- Wolves are hunting bears in open areas; and, wolves are also eating other wolves. (Both indicate a problem situation for wolves)
- Traditional foods remain important and form a large part of many people’s diet. Meat is generally shared. Perceptions varied as to whether basic household needs for moose were met. Although many people have traditionally eaten many animal species, moose remain the most important source of traditional food, followed by caribou and fish. Moose remain a preferred alternative to store bought meat because it tastes better and it’s cheaper.

**Wolf conservation and management – general approach**

- A balanced approach to wolf management is required: one that balances the needs of wolves and people; and one that recognizes the important place of wolves in the landscape and their own right to exist along with other animals and people.
- Non-consumptive use and appreciation of wolves remains important.

- Some people believe the only situation that would justify managing wolves would be to prevent local moose or caribou population from disappearing; not to increase hunting opportunities for ungulates or to reduce human/wolf conflict. However, many believe that too many moose are being hunted in the Mayo area and that it is necessary to reduce numbers of wolves too so that there were enough moose to sustain hunting levels.
- These are complicated systems and we shouldn't focus just on wolves. There is climate, hunting, access, and other predators.
- Hunters need to change their expectation of getting a moose every year.
- Reduction of wolf numbers may ultimately hurt moose population because weaker animals will not be removed from the population and will breed.

### **Management of hunting and trapping of wolves**

- In the past, "pupping" was traditionally practiced in the spring. The practice was to shoot the "oldest" pup as this was the one that could be a potential pack leader.
- Concern was raised about trapping wolves in town due to the collateral damage that this may cause with injury to dogs and children.
- Shooting the leaders of wolf packs affected the social organization and behaviour of a pack.
- Poisoning wolves directly affects many other wildlife species that eat contaminated bait.
- The practice of rotating trapping areas to allow animals to rebuild their numbers is an important traditional practice.
- Perception held by some that wolves were very difficult to trap; snaring and hunting wolves were easier methods.
- General perception that the economics of trapping wolves (due to high costs and low fur prices) discouraged many trappers from trapping them. This directly affected the participation of youth as well.
- Financial incentives are required to make trapping of wolves viable and worthwhile. Current incentives offered by the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Yukon Outfitters Association are not adequate to overcome the financial disincentives of hunting and trapping wolves: \$1,000 is a more realistic financial supplement and cheaper than helicopter-supported aerial shooting.
- A pilot wolf trapping incentive program should be initiated in several communities on an experimental basis. Partnerships between YG, First Nation governments and RRCs would be important in implementing such a program.
- The Mayo RRC wants to initiate a program of trapping incentives (focus on snaring).
- There is little incentive to continually trap wolves beyond an initial period that effectively reduces a majority of wolves. It would be human nature to reduce trapping effort and allow the wolves to rebound so that trappers would make more money by trapping more wolves. This raises several questions: whether a continuous effort is

likely or effective; and, whether a cyclical non-continuous program is desirable and effective.

- One effect of eliminating large wolf packs may be to produce a greater number of lone wolves that would then target communities as a more easily accessible source of food.
- Financial challenges facing trappers today may be partially addressed by developing ecotourism opportunities on trap line concessions.
- Government regulations are barriers to the participation of trappers generally and the trapping of wolves specifically. Small or modest changes to current government regulations could eliminate some of the barriers which individually may not seem like much of a disincentive, but cumulatively they are.
- Trapping is likely the only acceptable technique available to reduce wolf numbers, however there is skepticism that it would work.

### **Management of ungulates**

- People rarely kill cow moose. The killing of older cow moose pregnant with a calf is generally reserved for elders who regard it as a rare delicacy.
- A growing human population will continue to increase hunting pressures on moose and to increase competition between people and wolves for moose and caribou. This will require more attention to harvest management, and, possibly in the future, permitted hunts. Moose management needs to be integrated with a wolf management plan.
- The moose population in the Mayo area could likely sustain local harvest but many hunters come into the area from Whitehorse and the Yukon government will not consider local preference. If unlimited entry to hunting in the Mayo area continues, then there needs to be a balance and wolf numbers need to be reduced locally. Local people still want the opportunity to hunt locally.

### **Wolf – human conflict**

- In the recent past there have been too many wolves around town. This is not a problem currently, and there is not a public safety issue with wolves in Mayo.
- Trapper training in the community could be accomplished in one-day. Most people don't have the time to attend current 5-day programs. Opportunities should be available for trapper to challenge trapper certification requirements without completing a trapper training course (like in British Columbia).

### **Conditions for wolf population reduction**

- Currently, there is no interest in large-scale wolf population reduction programs as contemplated in the 1992 plan.

### **Education and Outreach**

- Training programs for trapping (snaring) wolves can be effective and should be offered in the community.
- Training and education are important for attracting youth to participation in trapping.

Participants who attended the public meeting responded to a questionnaire circulated by the RRC. The comments are summarized below:

*What concerns do you have with wolves*

- There are too many wolves
- Too many wolves coming into the community
- Wolves kill too many moose and are coming into town limits. Concerns for young children.
- Packs of 20 wolves is too much.
- Wolves are hunting bears.
- Concerns about dogs being taken by wolves in the community, community safety.

*What do you think are the solutions to your concerns?*

- Get rid of the government and let the RRC manage their own territories
- Provide trapping incentives to manage wolves
- Let people hunt wolves and more price for furs.
- Remove more wolves.

The RRC also posted three questions for participants to indicate the extent of their support for certain approaches to wolf management. These are summarized below.

What are acceptable methods of wolf management in the NND traditional territory?  
Based on 43 responses first choice/20 responses second choice

Poison – 0%
Aerial shooting – 0%/1%
Incentives for trapping – 77%/15%
Sterilization – 0%
Bounty – 9%/65%
No-management – 14%/15%

What species does the government need to focus time, energy and money in surveys and enhancement? (Based on 46 responses first choice/22 responses second choice)

Sheep – 4%/14%
Goats – 0%
Bison – 0%
Elk – 0%
Caribou – 17%/77%
Moose – 78%/9%

Why is trapping at a low?  
*Based on 49 first response/19 second response*

Fuel prices – 16%/42%
Lack of interest or knowledge – 20%/5%
Low fur prices – 55%/16%
Difficulty/distance to access traplines – 4%/10%
Interference from other users – 4%/26%

How would you like to see wolf management in the NND traditional territory?  
*Based on 41 first response/5 second response*

Community Based – 98%/40%
YG/YFWMB territory wide – 2%/60%