

MEETING NOTES

Pickhandle Lakes Steering Committee Meeting

Whitehorse

Yukon Inn – Willow Room

December 8th, 2011

Members | David Johnny Sr. White River First Nation · **Sam White** Kluane First Nation · **Bob Kuiper** Yukon Government · **Karen Clyde** Yukon government

Support Staff | Tess McLeod Yukon government · **Kym Rempel** Kluane First Nation

Action items carried over:

Action 11-9-4: Bob will continue with a technical analysis to determine the compatibility of Pickhandle Lakes HPA objectives with mineral exploration and development. Bob will send out the work done previously on this topic for the Devil's Elbow HPA to committee members.

New Action Items:

Action 11-12-1: Tess will submit a request to the Water Resources branch for a write up on potential water quality monitoring programs that could be conducted in the PLHPA.

Action 11-12-2: The Kluane regional staff will write a summary on potential moose calving study designs for the PLHPA.

Action 11-12-3: David Johnny will let us know in January about his role on the steering committee when he returns to work for Highways and Public Works.

1. Meeting Start

The meeting started at 9:00am on Thursday, December 8th, 2011.

2. Review of agenda

The agenda was approved

3. Guest Speakers:

Afan Jones – Yukon Parks

- Parks has had a long term interest in the interpretive area at the Pickhandle Lake pull off. This area is used to promote and exhibit wildlife viewing in the area. There are five sites along the Alaska Highway that were picked to promote a variety of wildlife features and that had easy access from the highway.
- The interpretive panels were created in 1991-92.
- Currently the interpretive platform needs to be fixed as it is slumping into the lake.
- There is also an old dock that needs maintenance or removal. Parks is not responsible for this dock.
- The interpretive panels were redesigned by Environment Yukon – Wildlife Viewing.
- The interpretive site is called a ‘recreational site’ which usually comes with a set of rules and is listed in the Parks schedule. Pickhandle Lakes Recreation Site however is not, this area falls under the administration of the *Yukon Lands Act*.

Bernie Cross – Highways and Public Works

- There is no plan for any reconstruction work on the highway in the area for the next 50-60 years; there is potential for road surfacing repairs.
- There are no gravel interests in the area, particularly on the side of the highway that the HPA is on.

- No river channel work is done in the area, there are repairs done on the existing bridge whenever necessary.
- Highways work is usually completed in early spring (May).
- There are minimal salts used on the highway.
- The highway is plowed when needed which generally takes one day.
- Brushing only occurs when sight lines need to be maintained.
- Culverts are maintained on an as needed basis, no schedule.
- Re-vegetation was completed around 10 years ago, during reconstruction. There are a few concerns regarding wildlife being attracted to these new plants and them coming closer to the highway.
- H&PW awards access permits, though they have to go through YESAA beforehand and once a road is out of the highway right of way H&PW are no longer responsible for the road.

Bob Truelson & Jean Beckerton – Water Resources

- Baseline data on water quality in Pickhandle Lakes HPA would be very valuable.
- It would be useful to learn more about how water flows into and out of the area.
- It is approximately \$2000 for analysis of water samples four times a year, this price would increase if oil and grease analysis was also conducted on the samples.
- The committee will put in a request to water resources for a written summary of water quality monitoring options.
- The committee will also collect any water quality data that has been collected in the area historically.

Troy Pretzlaw & Lorne Larocque – Environment Yukon

- Moose:
 - Survey results will be available soon.
 - Calving is important in the HPA during May – June (anecdotal info only, survey could be done & would cost \$5-10k).

- In Sept – Oct, moose go to higher country.
- HPA currently used for harvesting moose.
- Main management concerns:
 - Over harvesting
 - Aircraft disturbance
 - Water disturbance (water levels and quality, waves, boats etc.)
 - Motorized activities (increased boat or land access & noise)
 - Increased trails & clearings
- Muskrat:
 - Survey info: over 1000 push ups observed.
 - Populations can fluctuate year to year.
 - Mink, coyotes, wolverine, otter & pike are predators for muskrats.
 - Main concern: maintain water levels & water quality.
- Beavers:
 - Low density due to mostly coniferous vegetation. Beavers need deciduous.
- Bears:
 - Lots in the HPA, blacks and grizzlies, all seasons.
- Fish:
 - Lake whitefish, Pike and grayling in Pickhandle Lake & Koidern River.
 - Lower Koidern River (below highway bridge) used for spawning by chum salmon
 - No immediate concerns.
- Raptors:
 - Exist in area.

- Management concern: do not alter habitat. Do not interfere with inflow water sources.
- Amphibians:
 - Wood Frogs are present in HPA.
 - Not of concern.
- Small mammals:
 - Red backed voles.
 - Bats.
- Goats:
 - On rock face north-east of HPA.
 - Good wildlife viewing opportunity from the rest stop/platform.

4. Next meeting

No date was set for the next steering committee meeting. The next meeting is tentatively planned for late January 2012.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was intended to continue on Friday, December 9th, 2011, however forum was not held due to travel requirements of steering committee members. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm on Thursday, December 8th, 2011. The next meeting dates will be set in the new year.