

Board Meeting Minutes

17-18 December 2024 Date:

WRRB Boardroom, Yellowknife, NT Location:

Board Members:

Joseph Judas (Chair)

Travis Washie (Tłycho Appointee) Eddie Chocolate (Tłycho Appointee) Tom Lafferty (Tłycho Appointee)

Stu Niven (Federal Appointee)

Suzanne Carrière (GNWT Appointee) Steve Matthews (GNWT Appointee) Janelle Nitsiza (Tłycho Appointee)

Isabelle Duclos (Federal Appointee)

Staff:

Interpreters: Laura Meinert James Rabesca Mary Drake Peter Huskev Jody Pellissey Darin - PIDO

Guests:

Paul Vesci, TG

Bruce Laurich, ECCC Kelby Ogryzlo, ECCC Samuel Hache, ECCC Amy Amos, DFO Karin Clark, ECC

Stephanie Behrens, TG

Call to Order: 9:12 a.m.

Opening Prayer: Joseph Judas

1.0 **Agenda and Previous Minutes**

1.1 Approval of Agenda

> Motion #946-17-12-2024 To approve the 17-18 December 2024

> > agenda as presented

Moved: Suzanne Carrière Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

1.2 **Approval of Minutes**

13-14 August 2024

Motion #947-17-12-2024 To approve the 13-14 August 2024 minutes

as presented

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

10 October 2024

Motion #948-17-12-2024 To approve the 10 October 2024 minutes as

presented

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

12 November 2024

Motion #949-17-12-2024 To approve the 12 November 2024 minutes

as presented

Moved: Suzanne Carrière Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

1.3 Review of Action Items

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

2.0 Business

2.1 Review & Approval of Sahtì Ekwò Herd Reasons for Decision Report

Draft Report, entitled "Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board Recommendations and Reasons for Decision on Management Actions for Sahtì Ekwò (Bluenose-East Caribou) Herd", tabled

Discussions included: how can we determine the allocation outside of Wek'èezhìı? NWMB will allow 450 animal harvest by Kuglukuk, but no harvest by Sahtu in many years, harvest rate could be lower or higher, harvest rates are always a minimum estimate of harvest, is it a requirement to report harvest?

Motion #956-18-12-2024 To approve the determinations and

recommendation in the Sahtì Ekwò Herd Reasons for Decision Report as presented

Moved: Janelle Nitsiza Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

ACTION #682-18-12-2024 (ED): To submit Sahtì Ekwộ Herd Reasons for Decision Report to TG and GNWT by January 15, 2025.

2.2 Review & Approval of Wildlife Research Permit Application – Bison Integrated Genomics

Ejie (wood bison) are listed as Threatened by both the *Species at Risk Act* (*NWT*) and by the federal *Species at Risk Act*. All ejie are at a high risk of inbreeding as they came from around 200 animals; however, the Mackenzie herd is at an even higher risk as it started from around 18 animals who were reintroduced to the area in the 1960s. The herd is also vulnerable to anthrax outbreaks, which kill many animals and cause the rest to be more inbred.

On November 1, 2024, the University of Saskatchewan (USask) submitted a Wildlife Research Permit application to the WRRB to create an ejie genetic biobank for the Mackenzie herd. The objectives of the research are to rescue and collect disease-free semen and embryos from wild ejie, to ensure genetic diversity for generations to come. This research lines up with objectives and risks (low genetic diversity, hybridization with cattle, and inbreeding) noted in the Mackenzie Bison Management Plan, Recovery Strategy for Wood Bison (Bison bison athabascae): In the Northwest Territories and the Wood Bison (Bison bison athabascae): Recovery Strategy in Canada 2018.

A Materials Transfer Agreement will ensure the materials are provided legally to USask, and ensuring that the University manages the storage, usages, and ensures data transparency within the project's guidelines

This research is being conducted with all eight wild herds in the world (all found in Canada); collection of ten sperm and ten eggs from each of the eight wild herds. USask is also doing work on anthrax and brucellosis vaccines; interested in Mackenzie bison b/c it is a disease-free herd. The Mackenzie herd is the least inbred, i.e., most pure wood bison, all wood bison herds are inbred with Plains Bison.

Motion #950-17-12-2024 To approve the Wildlife Research Permit

Application, entitled "Bison Integrated Genomics", as presented pending acquisition of a Wildlife Care Committee Permit and a Materials Transfer Agreement approved by the necessary authorities and

acceptable to the GNWT and Tłįchǫ

Government

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Isabelle Duclos

Motion Approved

ACTION #676-17-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to University of Saskatchewan to approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled "Bison Integrated Genomics".

2.3 Review & Approval of Wildlife Research Permit Application – Wolverine and Grizzly Bear Density and Distribution Surveys – Lockhart All-Season Road

On November 14, 2024, the GNWT submitted a Wildlife Research Permit application for baseline studies on nǫgha (wolverine) and sahcho (grizzly bear) density and distribution to support an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the proposed Lockhart All-Season Road (LASR). Data and information will support the assessment and mitigation of potential impacts on wildlife of an all-season road corridor through the LASR project area. Currently, the LASR has not begun the EA assessment process; however, it is anticipated it may begin in spring 2025. This project will use non-invasive DNA sampling from sahcho and nǫgha hair to estimate the number animals in the LASR area before construction begins.

The objectives of the program, occurring from February 1, 2024 to September 30, 2029 are to: 1) Implement a non-invasive study to collect data on the abundance of multiple species in the LASR project area, with an emphasis on predators; 2) Conduct pre-construction surveys to determine density and distribution of nogha and sahcho, and assess if additional surveys are needed; 3) Create maps of the two species within the LASR project area; 4) Create an archive of hair samples for multiple species, that can support wildlife impact assessments and mitigation for the LASR project; and, 5) Inform managers on how best to select road routing and mitigate impacts associated with a new road.

Discussions included: initial road work will be to Lockhart Lake for now, but eventually to Grays Bay; use of information from the mines will be flagged during the EA; all hair collected with be analyzed even if not a targeted species, cameras also a part of the program at each hair snagging station.

Motion #951-17-12-2024 To approve the Wildlife Research Permit

Application, entitled "Wolverine and Grizzly Bear Density and Distribution Surveys – Lockhart All-Season Road", as presented

Moved: Stu Niven Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

ACTION #677-17-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to GNWT to approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled "Wolverine and Grizzly Bear Density and Distribution Surveys – Lockhart All-Season Road".

2.4 Review & Approval of Wildlife Research Permit Application – Moose Range Use, Demography, and Habitat Use in the Taiga Shield/Lockhart All-Season Road Corridor

On November 29, 2024, the GNWT submitted a Wildlife Research Permit application for baseline studies on dedii (moose) movements, habitat selection, and population trend indicators (calf recruitment, adult survival) in the area of the proposed Lockhart All-Season Road (LASR) corridor. This research will support the assessment and mitigation of potential impacts on wildlife of an all-season

road corridor through the LASR project area. Currently, the LASR has not begun the EA assessment process; however, it is anticipated it may begin in spring 2025.

The methods of the program, occurring from February 1, 2025 to February 28, 2030 include: 1) Deploy up to 15 GPS collars on female dedit in the LASR study area and up to 5 GPS collars on males each year (40 total in 2 years); 2) Dedìi will be captured by using darting and anesthesia using established methods used in the NWT; 3) Collar deployment is planned in February-March 2025 and 2026; 4) Airplane survey will be flown each March to monitor calf recruitment and twinning rates; and 5) Collars will be programmed to collect one location every hour all year and will drop-off after 4.5 years.

Discussions included: why are moose moving north, due to bison?; muskox seen near YK and Behchokò, animals from barrenland moving this way and other animals moving north, why happening?; a lot changes, good to do studies.

Motion #952-17-12-2024 To approve the Wildlife Research Permit

Application, entitled "Moose Range Use, Demography, and Habitat Use in the Taiga Shield/Lockhart All-Season Road Corridor", as presented pending acquisition of a

Wildlife Care Committee Permit

Moved: Travis Washie Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

ACTION #678-17-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to GNWT to approve the Wildlife Research Permit Application, entitled "Moose Range Use, Demography, and Habitat Use in the Taiga Shield/Lockhart All-Season Road Corridor".

2.5 Review & Approval of ACCWM Proposed Herd Statuses – Sahtì, Bluenose-West, & Cape Bathurst Ekwò

The ACCWM met on November 19-21, 2024 in Yellowknife and via Zoom video conferencing for the 9th Annual Status Meeting to discuss community-based monitoring and scientific information for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose-West, and Sahtì Ekwò (Bluenose-East) caribou herds. Based on the information provided, the ACCWM proposed the following statuses for each herd: Cape Bathurst herd is in the YELLOW zone, the Bluenose-West herd is in the ORANGE zone and the Sahtì Ekwò herd is in the YELLOW zone.

Specifically, for the Sahtì Ekwò herd, the ACCWM noted that the community and scientific observations presented have not changed significantly from 2023. Community knowledge from the Kugluktuk Hunters & Trappers Organization and the Tłıcho Government's Ekwò Nàxoèhdee K'è program at Deèzàatì (Point Lake) indicated that smaller groups were observed but were healthy and in good condition. The 2023 photo estimate for the herd is 39,525, which is statistically significant from the 2021 estimate of 23,202. There are uncertainties about the

population estimate; however, demographic information such as adult survival, pregnancy rates, and calf survival rates suggest herd recovery. Based on the available information, the ACCWM Member Boards felt that there was sufficient evidence that the status for the herd should remain as YELLOW.

Each Member Board is required to get approval for the proposed statuses within 30 days. The Member Boards share their decision to ensure consensus. If consensus is not initially reached, the ACCWM Member Boards will hold a conference call in January 2025.

Motion #953-17-12-2024 To approve the proposed statuses for the

Sahtì (Yellow), Bluenose-West (Orange), & Cano Bathuret (Yellow), Ekwà horde as

Cape Bathurst (Yellow) Ekwò herds as

presented

Moved: Isabelle Duclos Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

ACTION #679-17-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to ACCWM to approve the proposed statuses for the Sahtì (Yellow), Bluenose-West (Orange), & Cape Bathurst (Yellow) Ekwò herds.

2.6 Review & Approval of BCAC Proposed Herd Status – Kok'èetì Ekwò

On December 10 and 11, 2024, the BCAC held its fourth annual status meeting to discuss the 2025 Kǫk'èetì Ekwǫ (Bathurst caribou) herd status. Science and Traditional Knowledge were shared by the GNWT, Indigenous governments and organizations, hunter and trapper organization, and management boards. There has been no population survey done on the herd since 2022. Community and Indigenous knowledge shared indicated the Kǫk'èetì Ekwǫ were in good shape and appeared healthy. The Tłլchǫ Government did not report seeing any sick or injured animals when they were on the land. Some groups observed dìga (wolves) on the winter road, while some saw none.

The group determined that the herd status should remain at a Critical Low. A Bathurst Caribou 2025 Action Plan will now be drafted and will be presented to the Board at a future meeting for review and approval.

Motion #954-17-12-2024 To approve the proposed status for the

Kok'èetì Ekwò (Critical Low) herd as

presented

Moved:Suzanne CarrièreSecond:Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

ACTION #680-17-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to BCAC to approve the proposed status for the for the Kok'èetì Ekwò (Critical Low) herd.

2.7 Review & Approval of Request for Additional Timber Volume

In May 2024, Mitchell Wierenga applied to cut up to 150 cords of dead spruce/pine fuelwood from kms 170-210 on Highway #3. This excludes areas from km172-174 and 185-188 on East side of Highway 3 due to Land Use Permits associated with Commercial Harvesting. The Board approved this TCP application.

Mitchell Wierenga has requested to add 100 cords of green wood (spruce/pine) to his current permit. At this time, Environment & Climate Change, GNWT does not object to this request.

Motion #958-18-12-2024 To approve the request for additional timber

volume for Mitchel Wierenga as presented

Moved: Travis Washie Second: Isabelle Duclos

Motion Approved

ACTION #684-18-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to GNWT to approve the request for additional timber volume for Mitchel Wierenga.

2.8 Review & Approval of COSEWIC Designatable Unit Report on Horned Lark

Since 1970, the Horned Lark has experienced a population reduction of about 70%, or 182 million individuals, across North America. Over 20% of the global population is estimated to breed in Canada.

The Streaked Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*) was assessed by COSEWIC in 2003 and 2018 as Endangered; however, the status of the other eight subspecies has not yet been formally assessed. The remaining subspecies share multiple characteristics (e.g. habitat, appearance, genetics, etc.), so unlike the Streaked Horned Lark, which could be assessed individually, it may not be appropriate to assess the remaining subspecies separately. COSEWIC is proposing to group the subspecies as Designatable Units (DUs), where a species is classified as discrete and evolutionarily significant, based on predetermined guidelines.

Six options for a Horned Lark DU structure in Canada were considered using six categories: distribution and range disjunction, phylogenetics (study of the evolutionary history of life using genetics), morphology (the study of the shape and arrangement of organisms in biology), plumage colouration, migration traits, and breeding habitat specialization. The option to have Horned Lark consist of five DUs was the only option that met the criteria for the species to be classified as discrete and evolutionarily significant.

On October 28, 2024, the WRRB provided in-principal support of the Horned Lark consisting of five DUs. Once approved, the Horned Lark can undergo formal status assessment.

Motion #959-18-12-2024 To approve the COSEWIC Degisnatable

Unit for the Horned Lark as presented

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

ACTION #685-18-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to the Bird Species Specialist Committee to approve the designatable unit for Horned Lark.

- 2.9 Party Updates
 - a) Tłycho Government, Paul Vesci

PowerPoint Presentations entitled, "2024 Tłįchǫ Community-based Monitoring Program Developments", tabled

Discussions included: sediment can affect how clear the water is, sediment load can introduce different things into the water, due to wildfires plant and tree root systems are dead and not holding the land the same way as the past, land is being washed into the water; Wekweètì parasite, actually a benign growth in an organ, not unusual, plan to return to community in March 2025, when do sampling some of the sites are near the town and/or sewage lagoon, nothing alarming or different found; possible to test fish at different lakes around the community of Wekweètì, TAEMP requires concentrating on community big lake, but frozen fish from other lakes can be sampled (minimum of five fish).

b) Environment & Climate Change Canada, Bruce Laurich, Kelby Ogryzlo, Samuel Hache

PowerPoint Presentations entitled, "Wolverine (Gulo gulo): Summary of the Draft Management Plan 2024", "ECCC-CWS Species at Risk Update", and "CWS/NR Landbird Program Update", tabled

Discussions included: visit communities to talk about loss of birds, try to engage in the community as much as possible, give plain language presentations in the schools, validating and getting TK from communities, important to share and learn from one another, WRRB interest in organizing a bird workshop?; community students can have equipment to record birds, 600 ARUs in warehouse, welcome to have school/organizations to put out.

i) Review & Approval of Management Plan for Wolverine in Canada for Posting to the Species at Risk Public Registry

Motion #957-18-12-2024 To approve the posting of the Wolverine

Draft Management Plan to the SAR Public

Registry

Moved: Stu Niven Second: Tom Lafferty

Motion Approved

ACTION #683-18-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to ECCC to approve the posting of the Wolverine Draft Management Plan to the SAR Public Registry.

c) Fisheries & Oceans Canada, Amy Amos

PowerPoint Presentations entitled, "Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Arctic Region Update", tabled

Discussions included: resource management officer training, is the end goal to have fishery guardians, focusing on data collection and observational skills to ensure consistency across the country, rather than enforcement the work is with Indigenous groups to do monitoring and data collection; research is national priority with a focus on commercial fisheries or species at risk, priorities from comanagement boards; there is no aquatic invasive species group.

d) Environment & Climate Change, GNWT

Document, entitled "ECC Wildlife Management Division Headquarters Update", tabled

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

i) Review & Approval of Kok'èetì Ekwò Joint Management Proposal Extension Request, Karin Clark (GNWT) & Stephanie Behrens (TG)

Discussions included: mobile zone buffer, which has been at 50km since last harvest season; collars outside of the calving ground survey area being used for the mobile zone, new collars are not used for mobile zone (those put out in Oct), only those labeled as Bathurst, new collars not labeled until go to calving ground in June; length of extension.

Motion #955-17-12-2024 To approve the Kok'èetì Ekwò Joint

Management Proposal Extension Request

as presented

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

ACTION #681-17-12-2024 (ED): To write letter to GNWT and TG to approve Kok'èetì Ekwò Joint Management Proposal Extension Request.

3.0 Financial

3.1 Review & Approval of Financial Statements as of 30 November 2024

Motion #960-18-12-2024 To approve the financial statement as of 30 November 2024 as presented

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Suzanne Carrière

Motion Approved

3.2 Review of 2024/2025 Interim Activity Report

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

4.0 Operations

4.1 Review of Legal Memo: RE: Effects of GNWT *UNDRIP Implementation Act*on WRRB Decision-Making

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Implementation Act* (the Act) was a collaborative process that built on existing legislation in British Columbia and the Federal Act. The Act was given assent on October 6, 2023 in the NWT. The Act requires that new GNWT legislation must, by second reading, be accompanied by a Statement of Consistency (SOC) indicating that the legislation is consistent with UNDRIP. Joint management proposals will still be sent to the WRRB as the Act does not undo existing regulation making processes. Consistency with UNDRIP is intended to support and strengthen the role of co-management partners.

John Donihee reviewed and produced a legal memo. The main conclusion is that the *UNDRIP Implementation Act* will not affect federal legislation or WRRB decisions made under such legislation, if they require regulation changes. It does not appear that the Act enactment is going to add additional time to GNWT timelines for the development or amendment of statutes. It is noted that the SOC process should be integrated into the work done to draft the legislation from the outset. For WRRB decisions, which do not have to be reflected in GNWT regulations, the UNDRIP Implementation Act will have no effect – the SOC requirement applies only in relation to GNWT laws.

It is suggested that when the Board makes any decisions which will require changes to GNWT regulations, for staff to explicitly question ECC staff to see if implementation of the Act is going to extend the government's regulation development process.

4.2 In-camera Session

Motion #961-18-12-2024 To go in camera at 10:02 am

Moved: Tom Lafferty Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

Motion #962-18-12-2024 To come out of camera at 10:15 am

Moved: Stu Niven

Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

Motion #963-18-12-2024 To approve a two percent merit increase for

Jody Pellissey

Moved: Stu Niven

Second: Steve Matthews

Motion Approved

ACTION #686-18-12-2024 (ED): To send salary change information for Jody Pellissey to NEBS.

5.0 Information Items

5.1 Working Group Table

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

5.2 Permit Tracking Table

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

5.3 Communications Update

During the last several months, Mary has been actively exploring meaningful ways to connect with the Tłįchǫ communities both within and outside of her professional capacity. Mary completed the 2025 calendars for distribution in December 2024. The theme focused on "celebrating Wek'èezhìı's beauty by featuring a variety of mammals found here." She also completed and distributed the Fall 2024 eNewsletter in October 2024. Mary also makes weekly Facebook posts on wildlife and wildlife habitat as well as sharing weekly mobile zone updates, WRRB news, daily operations, staff travel, and office closures.

Mary continues to participate in, a Certificate program at Royal Roads University called the *Indigenous Environmental Leadership program*. She has been approved to conduct her practicum by visiting the Whatì school, with WRRB biologists, to present on wildlife and wildlife habitats that align with the school's current curriculum.

Board Member recommendations: add Member bios and photo to website, switch calendar distribution numbers between Gamètì and Whatì, and increase the font size for future calendars.

6.0 Other Items

6.1 Round Table

Board Members thanked one another, interpreters, PIDO, and staff for a good meeting. Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season and look forward to

making it to the next meeting in a healthy way. Members reminded one another that their decisions affect others outside of Wek'èezhìı, they must continue to increase knowledge about wildlife, esp. caribou so we don't lose a herd, and to share information with harvesters. The land cannot speak for itself.

6.2 Next Meeting

Chairperson

The next meeting dates are:

- February 11-12, 2025, Yellowknife
- May 27-28, 2025, Wekweètì

Closing Prayer:	Joseph Judas
Adjournment:	10:40 a.m. (Motion #964-18-12-2024)
Minutes Approved:	
ORIGINAL SIGNED	February 11, 2025

Date