



Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 17-18 December 2024
Location: WRRB Boardroom, Yellowknife, NT

Board Members: Joseph Judas (Chair) Travis Washie (Tłıchq Appointee) Eddie Chocolate (Tłıchq Appointee) Tom Lafferty (Tłıchq Appointee) Stu Niven (Federal Appointee) Suzanne Carrière (GNWT Appointee) Steve Matthews (GNWT Appointee) Janelle Nitsiza (Tłıchq Appointee) Isabelle Duclos (Federal Appointee)	Staff: Laura Meinert Mary Drake Jody Pellissey	Interpreters: James Rabesca Peter Huskey 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 Sahti Ekwò Herd Reasons for Decision Report

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

Discussions included: how can we determine the allocation outside of Wek'èezhì? 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 Sahti Ekwò Herd Reasons for Decision Report as presented*

Moved: Janelle Nitsiza
Second: Travis Washie

Motion Approved

ACTION #682-18-12-2024 (ED): To submit Sahti Ekwò 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

Ejje (wood bison) are listed as Threatened by both the *Species at Risk Act (NWT)* and by the federal *Species at Risk Act*. All ejje 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 ejje genetic biobank for the Mackenzie herd. The objectives of the research are to rescue and collect disease-free semen and embryos from wild ejje, 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 athabasca) In the Northwest Territories* and the *Wood Bison (Bison bison athabasca): 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 Tłı̨chǫ 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*”.

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 co-management 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 Kòk'èeti 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 Kòk'èeti 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 Kòk'èeti 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 Tłıchǫ 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’èezhìi’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 Whati 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 Gamèti and Whati, 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'èezhì, 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

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

Chairperson

Date