



Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 26-27 August 2025

Location: Behchoko Youth Centre & Tłıchq̓ Museum, Kò Gocho Sportsplex Centre, Behchokò, NT

Board Members:

Joseph Judas (Chair)
Janelle Nitsiza (Tłıchq̓ Appointee)
Eddie Chocolate (Tłıchq̓ Appointee)
Tom Lafferty (Tłıchq̓ Appointee)
Stu Niven (Federal Appointee)
Isabelle Duclos (Federal Appointee) (Zoom, Aug 27)

Staff:

Laura Meinert
Mary Drake
Amanda Weltman
Jody Pellissey

Interpreters:

James Rabesca
Jonas Lafferty

Regrets:

Travis Washie (Tłıchq̓ Appointee)
Steve Matthews (GNWT Appointee)
Suzanne Carrière (GNWT Appointee)

Guests:

Kathryn Yarchuk, ECCC
Kirsten Wilcox, ECCC (Zoom)
Samuel Hache, ECCC (Zoom)
Klaus Koehler, ECCC (Zoom)
James Hodson, ECC
David Tonken, Let's Plant Trees North
David Chen, Crowe MacKay (Zoom)

Call to Order: 10:44 a.m.

Opening Prayer: Joseph Judas

1.0 Agenda and Previous Minutes

1.1 Approval of Agenda

Motion #988-26-08-2025

To approve the 26-27 August 2025 agenda as presented

Moved:
Second:

Janelle Nitsiza
Stu Niven

Motion Approved

1.2 Approval of Minutes

27 May 2025

Motion #989-26-08-2025

To approve the 27 May 2025 minutes as presented

Moved:

Isabelle Duclos

Second:

Eddie Chocolate

Motion Approved

1.3 Review of Action Items

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

ACTION #700-26-08-2025 (ED): To provide follow up on past Action Items for the past couple of years.

2.0 Business

2.1 Review & Approval of Frank Channel Wildlife Management & Monitoring Plan

The Dehk'è Frank Channel Bridge (DFCB) Replacement Project is located within the boundaries of the Community Government of Behchokò and in the Highway 3 corridor. The Project involves building a new bridge just north of the existing bridge, which will subsequently be deconstructed as it is at the end of its useful life. The Project also involves reconfiguring the Highway 3 approaches to the new bridge, removing the existing approaches, and the development of a temporary camp facility to house the construction work force. Construction would start in fall 2025 and last three years.

The DFCB is a Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) project. As the GNWT is Party to the Tłıchq Agreement, they are required to submit the WMMP to the WRRB as a Wildlife Management Proposal under Section 12.5.1 of the Tłıchq Agreement. The GNWT first provided the WMMP Revision B for review on the Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board's (WLWB) Online Review System (ORS) for public comments in June 2025. WRRB Staff provided public comments on the WLWB's ORS on June 24, 2025. No other public comments were received on the WMMP.

The GNWT accepted all WRRB staff comments and made the appropriate changes, resulting in revision C of the WMMP. Revision C was submitted to the WRRB on August 1, 2025. The WMMP was posted to the WRRB's Management Proposals website page and open for comments for two weeks. No comments were received.

Board discussions included: any wildlife concerns, including bears, the work crew must contact ECC; the Board has informed ECC that the WRRB needs the last version of the document; people fish around the bridge, concern about the fish and habitat? DFO is reviewing in detail, not part of the WMMP, audio monitors will be put in the water to make sure noise not impacting fish; concern about birds nesting underneath the old bridge? Timing so birds would not be in the nests; need to make it the best bridge possible, not only serves YK but also all-season road to Nunavut, need to look seriously at bridges for big hauls, currently the Frank Channel bridge is the weak link, new bridge we can expect much bigger trucks hauling materials/houses, etc., change the whole highway corridor.

Motion #990-26-08-2025

To approve the Frank Channel Wildlife & Monitoring Plan, Revision C, as presented

Moved:
Second:

Stu Niven
Tom Lafferty

Motion Approved

ACTION #701-26-08-2025 (ED): To write letter to GNWT to approve the Frank Channel Wildlife Management & Monitoring Plan, Revision C.

2.2 Update on 2025 Kqk'èeti and Sahti Ekwò Calving Ground Surveys

The Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC) conducted aerial and ground surveys of Kqk'èeti (Bathurst) and Sahti (Bluenose East) Ekwò from June 3-15, 2025. The purpose of the surveys is to get updated population estimates for each herd, as well as the number of breeding females and calves.

WRRB staff participated in the surveys based out of Kugluktuk, Nunavut. Crews were able to complete reconnaissance flights for both herds prior to conducting the visual and photo surveys. Although this year there were no Kqk'èeti collars on the east side of Bathurst Inlet, extra reconnaissance flights were flown in that area to confirm that no animals were calving there as they had in previous years. The composition surveys were completed after the visual and photo surveys, with one crew relocating to Bathurst Inlet to be closer to the Kqk'èeti herd.

The barren-ground caribou technical working group met June 20, 2025 to discuss the preliminary results of the 2025 Kqk'èeti and Sahti Ekwò Calving Ground Surveys. Preliminary results of the visual surveys and composition surveys indicate high productivity and many cows with calves for the Sahti Ekwò. The preliminary results of the composition survey for the Kqk'èeti Ekwò are similar to the previous survey with a low ratio of 58 calves to 100 cows. Final results of the surveys should be available in winter 2025 once the photos from the photo survey have been examined.

Board discussions included: the survey took almost two weeks, TG was represented by Roy Judas; it will take several months (June to September) to count the caribou on the photos, photos are sent south for counting, then statistician does their work, estimate will be available at December 2025 meeting.

2.3 Update on Tłıchq Highway Corridor Working Group Meeting

The Tłıchq Highway (TH), formerly the Tłıchq All-Season Road, is a 94 km long two-lane gravel road from Highway 3 to Whatı, with an additional 3 km of road upgrades required on Community Government of Whatı lands, bringing the total TH footprint to 97 km. Construction on the TH commenced on September 3, 2019 and it was opened on November 30, 2021.

Under Measure 14-3 of the Mackenzie Valley Review Board's Report of Environmental Assessment (Report of EA), a Corridor Working Group (CWG) was established, which must meet twice a year. Measure 14-3 outlined that the developer of the TH, the GNWT Department of Infrastructure (INF), will establish,

fund, and maintain the CWG through the TH construction and for at least five years of operations.

On June 17, 2025, the most recent CWG meeting was held in Whatì, with WRRB staff participating. Board Staff provided updates on WRRB TASR-related work since the previous CWG meeting, and the CWG was given updates on environmental mitigation and monitoring work done in the region by the GNWT, Tłıchq Government, and others. WRRB Staff reiterated the importance of the meetings going forward and have no outstanding concerns. The next CWG meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 2025 in Yellowknife.

Board discussions included: noted that the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk CWG agreed to continue meeting beyond the required five years, slowly dissolved into as and when needed, TH CWG considering removing topics that are socio-economic in nature and focusing only on environmental topics; why TH CWG not including other Tłıchq communities? Other communities may have all-season roads in the future, they should be included so they can study and learn for the future, bring at least one person from each community to working group meetings, also should include youth in the meetings.

ACTION #702-26-08-2025 (ED): To recommend to TG, that in addition to Whatì, other Tłıchq communities should be attending the Tłıchq Highway Corridor Working Group Meetings.

ACTION#703-26-08-2025 (ED): To work with Tłıchq Board Members to bring youth participants to future WRRB meetings.

*** Special Presentation – Thank You Gift presented to Amanda Weltman as her 18-month term comes to an end at the beginning of November 2025.*

2.4 Update on Respected Harvesters Meeting

Officials from Government of the Northwest Territories, Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC), the winter road Joint Venture (JV), and Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations with memberships who harvest along the JV winter road, held a meeting on August 6, 2025 to promote safe, legal, and respectful harvesting, including managing access to or along the winter road. WRRB Staff attended as observers only.

The discussion focused on exploring legal options to managing access to the JV winter road and how to promote more respectful harvesting. The possibility of leasing portions of the road to allow the exclusion of some people was explored; however, it was determined that it would not likely be effective in the current situation. Discussions culminated in a consensus in the room that a voluntary no shooting corridor along the JV winter road would be endorsed by IGOs present.

Nine recommendations were drafted from the meeting, with an additional two longer term recommendations listed:

1. An endorsed, publicized, voluntary no-shooting corridor: 3km on each side of the TCWR (from the centerline)
2. Unified visual identity for all guardian programs

3. Harvest only what you need and gut piles or other inedible items should be left on the land, not the TCWR or lakes (respectful practices, safety for road maintenance, education needed)
4. Collaborative education efforts must continue, especially for young hunters (one trip, one hunt for your family)
5. Respect the land – pack out what you bring in (no more garbage)
6. All parts of harvested caribou are important – hides, antlers and heads can be brought back for artisans and tanners
7. Follow-up respected harvesters meeting immediately before TCWR open
8. ECC to better promote and identify check-in locations for hunters
9. More information is needed:
 - a. ECC to explore traffic counters to better understand TCWR traffic volumes
 - b. Guardian programs information on the amount of harvesters using the TCWR
 - c. RCMP engagement to share information about patrols along the TCWR

LONGER TERM

1. Legal no-shooting corridor under the Area Development Act (extensive consultation and development time needed)
2. Explore a Lease option at a TCWR choke point (like MacKay Lake) where TCWR Joint Venture partners can receive names of community hunters and then allow access through a gate (consultation needed; possibly a transponder can be shared to provide gate access)

Board discussions included: reviewed attendance list for IGOs in attendance; have to respect the animal as in the heart of the migration route, deeply rooted harvester's rules, TK seems to have been lost with respect to traditional rules, lots of other harvesters from south now, a lot of disturbance on the road, lots of winter road users, need to respect the land and wildlife; need to keep public educated, lots of wastage happening, can be dangerous out on the land, need to comply with traditional laws and the government law; look after wildlife they will look after you, caribou is a generous animal, need to respect the caribou, should not sell meat it should be shared.

2.5 Review & Approval of Commercial Timber Cutting Permit – Wierenga

Mitchell Wierenga has applied for a Commercial Timber Cutting Permit, which would be valid from August 2025 to August 2026. He has applied for 907 m³ of dead/green spruce/pine. The license is for 19cm or greater stump diameter outside bark, and 15 cm top diameter inside bark. The work will take place on Highway #3 between KM170 to KM210. Mr. Wierenga has also applied for the necessary Timber Transport Permit.

Mr. Wierenga intends to apply for the assignment of Kerry Smith's land use permit W2022W0005, located on Highway 3 at KM172, to himself as Mr. Smith is retiring from the firewood business. There are no changes proposed to the scope of the permit at this time. The WRRB will manage the response to the reassignment through the Wek'èezhì Land & Water Board process.

Motion #992-27-08-2025 *To approve the Commercial Timber Cutting Permit application for M. Wierenga as presented*

Moved: Janelle Nitsiza
Second: Stu Niven

Motion Approved

ACTION #705-27-08-2025 (ED): To write letter to GNWT to approve M. Wierenga's Commercial Timber Cutting Permit application.

2.6 Party Updates

a) Environment & Climate Change Canada

i) Update on CIMP Project & Recent Fieldwork, Samuel Hache

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled "*CWS/NR LandBird Program Update*", tabled

Board discussions included: all kinds of birds that come to Wekweètì, but some kinds of waterfowl, birds, geese, and swans are not coming anymore, boreal caribou used to roam around below the treeline, but do not roam as much as they once did, is this because the area is burnt, maybe no food? ECCC is hoping to have conversations with GNWT and communities about fires and the effects of fires on birds, also what birds are harvesters and elders not seeing anymore and birds that are being seen now that weren't there before.

ii) Review & Approval to Post Grizzly Bear Management Plan to SARA Registry, Kirsten Wilcox

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled "*Species at Risk Update – August 2025*", tabled

Board discussions included: Tłıchǫ name for grizzly bear; how does the smoke affect the wildlife? All the big fires in the south, will their wildlife move north, how will they survive with different weather? Our northern wildlife is moving around to areas never been in before, long summer is confusing to northern wildlife (climate change), how do the wildlife understand the weather, how being impacted by climate change?

Motion #993-27-08-2025 *To approve the posting of the Grizzly Bear Management Plan to the SARA Registry as presented*

Moved: Stu Niven
Second: Eddie Chocolate

Motion Approved

ACTION #706-27-08-2025 (ED): To write letter to ECCC to approve the posting of the Grizzly Bear Management Plan to the SARA Registry.

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled “*Species at Risk Update – August 2025*”, tabled

Moved: Isabelle Duclos
Second: Stu Niven

ACTION #707-27-08-2025 (ED): To write letter to ECCC to approve the posting of the Harris' Sparrow Management Plan to the SARA Registry.

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled “*Species at Risk Update – August 2025*”, tabled

Moved: Janelle Nitsiza
Second: Tom Lafferty

ACTION #708-27-08-2025 (ED): To write letter to ECCC to approve the posting of the Olive-sided Flycatcher Management Plan to the SARA Registry.

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled “*Species at Risk Update – August 2025*”, tabled

Moved: Janelle Nitsiza
Second: Stu Niven

Motion Approved

ACTION #709-27-08-2025 (ED): To write letter to ECCC to combine the two populations (Western & Magdalen Island, QC) of Horned Grebe into one population and list as Special Concern.

b) Environment & Climate Change, GNWT

i) North Slave Regional Update, James Hodson

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled *“North Slave Region Wildlife Updates – August 2025”*, tabled

Board discussions included: can the slope on the road affect how the caribou move? Movement at both shallow and steep slopes along the highway, a lot of winter boreal caribou habitat currently burning along Highway 3 and near Whatì, will see how that impacts the population; collaring programs, many collars over 20 years, never had one hit by a vehicle, very smart and wary, maybe due to the time of day they choose to cross the road?; 10 muskox seen on the south side of Ghost Lake, one muskox seen south of Wekweètì in the summer, 40-50 muskox seen NE of Wekweètì in treeline, not burned at that time, ECC has sightings of muskox at Russell Lake, and Northern Saskatchewan & Alberta.

Document, entitled *“ECC Wildlife Management Division Headquarters Update”*, tabled

Tabled for review by the Board Members.

c) Tłıchq Government

i) 2025/2026 Tłıchq Seedling Planting Project, David Tonken

PowerPoint Presentation, entitled *“Preserving Out Land: Preparing for the Future – Tłıchq Government Reforestation”*, tabled

Board discussions included: is there a process to keep bugs and other fungus from being brought back to the North (invasive species)? Planters need to wash boots, nursery takes care of ensuring no invasive species; 2025 first year, planting an average of 100,000 seedlings a day, no camp at James Lake (doesn't not make sense economically), fly in; depending on type of seedling, deciduous trees are planted in spring (to be planted by no later than July), spruce to be planted by late summer, emulating northern forest regrowth, five different species with different seed collection times, and planting times; cone collector in Wekweètì currently, two community helpers, do not have permits for Wekweètì yet as it takes 18 months to collect seeds and have seedlings ready, submission will be made to the WRRB.

3.0 Financial

3.1 Review & Approval of Audited Financial Statement as of 31 March 2025, Davin Chen

Auditor's Report is nearly complete. Crowe MacKay undertaking internal quality review. They do not feel there will be any requirement for change to auditor's report. A management letter will address concerns for improvement. Appropriate accounting standards are being used by the Board. There are no significant accounting estimates required. There are no management override controls required, no accounts payable outstanding, using appropriate revenue recognition, no accounts receivable outstanding, the risk is at an appropriate low level, financial disclosures are appropriate and complete, no significant or unusual transactions, no disagreements with management, and no difficulties during the audit.

Financial Statement fairly presents the position of the Board as of 31 March 2025 (clean audit). David reviewed the Statement of Operations, Statement of Changes in Fund Balance, Statement of Financial Position, and Statement of Cash Flow.

Motion #991-27-08-2025 *To approve the audited financial statement as of 31 March 2025 as presented*

Moved: Tom Lafferty
Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

ACTION #704-27-08-2025 (ED): To send the audited financial statement as of 31 March 2025 to CIRNAC.

3.2 Review & Approval of Financial Statements as of 31 July 2025

Motion #997-27-08-2025 *To approve the financial statement as of 31 July 2025 as presented*

Moved: Tom Lafferty
Second: Janelle Nitsiza

Motion Approved

3.3 Review & Approval of Principal Protected Notes

Since 2018, the Board has invested its Wildlife Studies Fund money with CIBC Wood Gundy as follows: 60% GIC ladder, 40% equities. The Board assumes medium risk with the equities; however, they balance the portfolio with a no risk GIC ladder. Any bonds are mostly Canadian corporate bonds. The equities are a mix of Canada and some US/world mix (ETFs and mutual funds). The fees are 1% of the portfolio (bonds and equities).

In July 2024, Rolanda Campbell, Portfolio Manager, Wood Gundy, sold the bond funds in the portfolio, which had incurred a loss. Although the bonds were defined as low risk, the value of the bonds had dropped due to the increase of interest rates starting in 2022. The proceeds from the sale of the bonds were used to purchase a Principal Protected Note (PPN) issued by CIBC.

If the PPN does not have the gains anticipated, the one million dollars is fully protected and will be returned with NO loss. The PPN is defined as low risk and is aligned with the fixed income portion of investing the assets. The rest of the portfolio assets remained in bonds and equities to achieve the portfolio objective. Our current investment in a 3-year PPN has already generated an unrealized gain of \$190,000 and the portfolio has delivered a return of 8.88% over the past year.

As of August 2025, Rolanda recommends the WRRB sell the remainder of its bonds that do not mature for several years and reallocate the cash to purchase PPN. Transitioning from long-dated bonds to PPNs is a prudent move in the current market context. This strategy offers capital protection, potential for higher returns, improved liquidity, and better alignment with our risk and return objectives. Additionally, Rolanda recommends selling the existing PPN as it has reached its target (up \$190,000). A new PPN can be repurchased for a longer duration to provide more capital upside.

Motion #998-27-08-2025 *To approve the proposed approach to sell the remaining bonds and existing Principal Protected Notes and initiate the purchase of new Principal Protected Notes as presented*

Moved: Tom Lafferty
Second: Stu Niven

Motion Approved

ACTION #710-27-08-2025 (ED): To write to Wood Gundy to approve the proposed approach to sell remaining bonds and existing Principal Protected Notes and purchase new Principal Protected Notes.

4.0 Operations

4.1 Review & Approval of Response to ERM External Review

WRRBs staff developed a qualitative assessment response with prioritization related to the ERM External Review. The response was reviewed with the Board at the May 2025 meeting. Board Members requested additional time for review until the August 2025 meeting.

Motion #999-27-08-2025 *To approve the response to the ERM external review as presented*

Moved: Tom Lafferty
Second: Stu Niven

Motion Approved

ACTION #711-27-08-2025 (ED): To post response to the WRRB website and share response with partners.

4.2 Review & Approval of AI Usage Policy

In April 2025, McLennan Ross shared their insights into employer due diligence required for employee use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) at work (<https://www.mross.com/what-we-think/article/employer-due-diligence-required-for-employee-use-of-generative-ai-at-work>).

While employee usage of generative AI large language models such as ChatGPT for work purposes is convenient, it is cautioned that generative AI usage may create ethical, legal, and financial exposure for employers. To mitigate the risks associated with employee generative AI use in the workplace, McLennan Ross states that *“it is critical employers implement a sound AI Workplace Usage policy”*.

Currently, the Board’s February 2024 version of the Operating Procedures Manual does not have a specific policy for the use of AI Tools. Instead, the Board has a policy statement, Use of Artificial Intelligence Language Models, shared with staff on May 31, 2023, which outlines the expectations for the appropriate use of AI language models to ensure the integrity of information shared externally. Natasha Sanders, legal counsel with McLennan Ross, provided the Board with the proposed policy for review and potential addition to the WRRB Operating Procedures Manual.

Motion #1000-27-08-2025 *To approve the “Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools Policy” for addition in the Operating Procedures manual as presented*

Moved: Tom Lafferty
Second: Stu Niven

Motion Approved

ACTION #712-27-08-2025 (ED): To add the *“Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools Policy”* to the WRRB Operating Procedures Manual.

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

Document, *entitled “Communications Officer Update – August 2025”, tabled*

ACTION #713-27-08-2025 (ED): To update the WRRB website as proposed for Board and staff.

6.0 Other Items

6.1 Round Table

Board Members thanked one another, interpreters, PIDO, and staff for a good meeting. Members appreciate learning from and sharing with one another, very respectful of one another, very happy to have Joseph back at the table, good team with great working relationships. The Board wished Amanda Weltman the best as she moves on from the Board. Members spoke about recent deaths and loss of wisdom in the Tłıchq region, including Louis Zoe, who reminded us to love one another.

6.2 Next Meeting

The next meeting dates are:

- December 16-17, 2025, Yellowknife
- February 10-11, 2026, Yellowknife

Closing Prayer: **Joseph Judas**

Adjournment: **12:42 p.m. (Motion #1001-27-08-2025)**

Minutes Approved:

ORIGINALS SIGNED

Chairperson

December 16, 2025

Date