



2018-2019 Annual Report Asek Renewable Resource Council

Mandate

The Asek Renewable Resources Council was established as a primary instrument for local renewable resources management in the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory, as set out in the Final Agreement. The Council, acting in the public interest and consistent with Chapter 16 of the Final Agreement, may make recommendations to the Minister, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation government, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Salmon Sub-Committee. The Council shall make provisions for public involvement in the development of its decisions and its recommendations.

Membership as of March 31, 2019

Chuck Hume
Larry Joe
Gary Darbyshire
Alternate: James Allen

Cameron MacKinnon
Mark Nassiopoulos
John Carney
Alternate: Brian Melanson

Staff

Laura MacKinnon

Community Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan

The Asek RRC continues to participate in the implementation of the Community Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan (2016-2021) for the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory which guides the ARRC's priorities, as directed by the community. The plan establishes four main priorities for the ARRC to focus their efforts on. These priorities include but are not limited to; population recovery of moose and freshwater fish, population monitoring and harvest management of sheep, as well as revitalizing the trapping industry in the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory (CATT).

Alsek Integrated Moose Management (AIMM) Project / Trapping

Moose harvest continues to be a hot topic within our community, much of the area is on the permit hunt authorization system for harvest, and with Whitehorse having a larger population, locals struggle with the lack of local harvest opportunity.

As part of the Alsek Integrated Community-Based Moose Management Plan a ground-based community wolf trapping program was established. This was a 3-year program financed through a contribution agreement between the Yukon Government and Champagne and Aishihik First Nation (CAFN).

This program had the possibility of being extended for an additional 2 years pending a review and that the agreements from the contribution agreement were upheld. March 2018 marked year 3 of the program. The program was reviewed by a 3rd party evaluation company, Penny Cooper and Associates. Alsek RRC members participated in the interview and evaluation process for the review.

Upon completion of the review, it was determined that funding for the administration of the community wolf trapping program to continue through years 4 and 5 would be discontinued. The Alsek RRC is disappointed in the lack of communication from the YG after the evaluation and final report was completed. A final report on the review was provided to the ARRC, however this report was never made public. This program was the first of its kind in the Yukon, and other communities were keeping a close eye on the project. It is disappointing that reasons for the decision to discontinue funding for the administration of the program, as well as the final report were not made public. Not only is the lack of communication disappointing to the ARRC and the trappers and community members involved throughout the duration of the project, it is also disappointing to the entirety of the Yukoners and other RRC's who were keeping an eye on this 'guinea pig' project.

Our community-based work plan establishes the revitalization of the trapping industry in the CATT as a priority for Council. The Alsek RRC is supportive of the trapping community within the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory. Council continues to provide snaring and trapping materials for trappers to utilize at our office at no cost. The council also continues to review registered trapping concession applications and make recommendations on reallocations.

Before the AIMM Community Wolf Trapping Program, an average of 4 wolves were trapped per year within the boundaries of where the program took place. During the 3 years that the program ran, there was an average of 16 wolves per year trapped by locals. This is still only 20-40% of the estimated wolf population; studies show a need for a harvest of 65-80% of the wolf population in order to have an impact and effect on moose populations. During the 4th year (2018/19) the contribution agreement between YG and CAFN ended and no financial aid was provided to administer the program. However, there were still 16 wolves harvested, which goes to show the benefit the program had on getting people back out on the land and revitalising the trapping industry within the CATT. Prior to the wolf snaring program, less than ½ of the Registered Trapping Concession's (RTC) in the program area were actively used for trapping. During the program, 10 of 13 RTC's were used. By year 3, 12 of 13 RTC holders agreed to have assistant trapper's use their line.

Outfitters

The Alsek RRC meets with local outfitters and continues to review quotas for outfitting concessions as needed. Mervyn's Yukon Outfitting, an outfit within the CATT has donated locally harvested meat to the Alsek RRC for distribution to community members who may not be able to harvest for them selves (seniors, low income families etc). The Alsek RRC and community are appreciative of good stewardship and community contributions by outfitters.

Forestry

The ARRC maintains communication and provides input on local timber harvest management within the CATT. Forest Management Branch reps often attend our meetings to provide operational updates and search for insights. Over the last year FMB has contracted out the development of a Timber Harvest Plan for the Quill Creek Bench to Ecofor and the Wood Products Association. This is the first THP in the Yukon to be done in this format – the THP's are normally developed by the Forest Management Branch. The ARRC has met with representatives of the Wood Products Association and Ecofor and has provided feedback into the process and development of the THP.

Starting in January 2019 a Strategic Forest Management Plan Indicators Committee was developed. The Committee consists of representatives from the Forest Management Branch, Alsek RRC and CAFN. The goal of the committee is to narrow down the 104 Indicators listed in the 2004 Strategic Forest Management Plan for the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory. This committee meets once a month.

Aishihik Advisory Committee

The Alsek Renewable Resource Council maintained council member participation on the Aishihik Advisory Committee for the Aishihik Water Use License and Fisheries Act Authorization Renewal.

The Aishihik Advisory Committee came up with a list of alternative measures that could be used at the hydro dam to ensure the longevity and health of Aishihik Lake. These alternatives were presented to CAFN citizens and residents of the CATT and were then going to be presented to Yukon Energy for consideration in their YESAB application for relicensing of the dam.

The proposals and the relationship between CAFN and Yukon Energy became highly publicized in the media. The Alsek RRC refrained from any public comment or participation in publicized articles on the sensitive matter around the Aishihik Hydro Dam renewal process.

Bison and Elk Management

Alsek RRC members continued to take the community's perspectives to Bison and Elk Technical Team meetings. The ARRC is also regularly updated and has input toward bison and elk harvests, surveys, etc. as part of its role in bison and elk management.

Grizzly Bear Management Plan

The Alsek RRC participated in reviewing the Draft Grizzly Bear Management Plan and attended/helped facilitate a public community presentation on the plan presented by the YFWMB. The Alsek RRC heard a lot of feedback from community members on their views of the plan and concerns in regards to ensuring the plan considered the need to allow for the management of grizzly bears in relation to predation of ungulate's. The Alsek RRC put forward a written recommendation to address this concern from the community.

Wildlife Act Regulation Changes

The Alsek RRC continues to prepare and make recommendations for submission in the Wildlife Act Regulation change process. Council has been disappointed in the delays of having approved regulation changes incorporated into the Wildlife Act Regulations summary. Admissions approved by the Minister from the 2015/16 reg change cycle and the 2017/18 cycle have yet to be incorporated into the regulations.

Land Use Planning

Council continues to review proponent driven submissions to YESAB and provide comments reflective of our work plan projects.

Council members have been participating in YG facilitated round tables on the development of a Wetland Policy.

Council also participated in off road vehicle regulations discussions and surveys facilitated by YG. A public presentation on the proposed ORV Regulations in Haines Junction had a turn out of over 60 people, which goes to show that this is a topic important to our community.

Council Operations

Council continued to meet once a month on the second Monday of each month. Additional council meetings were held when necessary. Council members were assigned certain portfolios (ie. Aishihik Advisory Committee, Bison, Forestry etc), and the applicable council member would attend any meetings associated with their assigned portfolios. Council was able to comply with their mandated duties throughout the year and followed their 2018/2019 general work plan.

Members attended the Annual General Workshop in Pelly during the Summer of 2018, and the annual Chairs meeting hosted by the YFWMB.

The Alsek RRC's regularly scheduled meetings were having a large turn out from members of the community and other organizations (Kluane Red Squirrel Projects researches, Parks etc.) which sparked us to try out different venues to host our meetings as our office space was not able to accommodate the larger groups.

RRC Members

Continuity of a full council is important to carry out the work that the Alsek RRC has been mandated with, as outlined in the CAFN Final Agreement. Often member's terms expire before other members are appointed or re-appointments are approved. The ARRC would like the Minister to consider advancing the application process so that quorum can be maintained, and as little time as possible is lost by membership change.

Once again, the Alsek RRC struggled with appointments and maintaining quorum. Last spring a member who's term expired March 31st, 2018, had reapplied to stay on council and we had an additional vacancy as of March 31, 2018. We also lost one of our long-standing members and co-chairs as she moved on to joining the YFWMB in May 2018. No appointments were made to our council until July, so for 4 months council had only 4 members and 1 alternate which made for a struggle to meet quorum at our meetings.

Office Operations and Variances

The new Executive Director (hired February 2018) took some training in Project Management and Minute Taking offered through the Yukon College, as well as some training with the council's bookkeeper on using the sage software.

In general, our audited financial statements for the 2018/19 fiscal year show that the Alsek RRC stayed on budget in accordance to our 2018-19 Budget from Appendix B of our Transfer Payment Funding Agreement.

The ARRC has not yet received an updated rental agreement from the landlord (CAFN). This had been discussed with the landlord in March of 2018 but there has been no further communication from the landlord in regards to updating and increasing our rental agreement as we had accounted for in our budget for 2018/19.

Our 18/19 FY Statement of Operations show an increase in 'Professional Fees' for the year; as this includes both our bookkeeping as well as audit fees. Line item 'Insurance' shows an increase as the ED's health benefits had been lumped in with insurance. 'Office and General' has a significant decrease from the previous fiscal year as a result of the purchase of new office furniture and computer during the 17/18 FY. 'Wages and Benefits' are lower than estimated and the previous year as the ED did not receive health benefits or RRSP contributions until after her 6-month probation period ended. 'Travel' is higher than the previous year but on budget as it lumps together travel, per diems and accommodations. The 'Purchase of Capital Assets' in the 18/19 FY is reflective of the wall tents and stoves council purchased for use at AGW's, General Assembly's etc.

Public Engagement

The Alsek Renewable Resource Council maintains a good relationship with the communities it serves, through public meetings, open houses and initiatives that bring people into the ARRC office. The Council's regular monthly meetings are open for the public to attend. The ARRC host's a bar-b-que in partnership with the St. Elias Firearms Association and Klwane

Conservation Officer's in the spring, as well as a Christmas open house, both public engaging community events. Representatives of the ARRC attended the 2018 Champagne and Aishihik General Assembly at Klukshu.

It is quite apparent that the Alsek area is home to many people who care about our local resources and how these resources are being managed. We have regularly been having large turnouts to our meetings and have been trying out different venues to accommodate the larger crowds.

Special Projects (Other Funding)

Pine Creek Fish Passage Investigation and Habitat Improvement Trial

Pine Lake (Pine Creek) is approximately 8 kilometers from Haines Junction, its Lake Trout populations have diminished and there is a closure on lake trout fishing/retention in the Lake. The Alsek RRC decided to initiate this project in 2016 in hopes to establish another local fishing option for future generations.

Through financing from the RRC Surplus Fund administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund, we retained biologists from Environmental Dynamics to continue to work on Pine Creek in hopes to enhance habitat and investigate potential barriers for the passage of Arctic Grayling. Habitat enhancement sites were created last August using logs and rocks to increase pool depth and create covers over pools in hopes to encourage the presence of adult Arctic Grayling in the Creek, and increase the amount of good quality holding and rearing habitat. Prior to the construction of these enhancement sites fish sampling and 3 pass electrofishing was done to determine a population estimate of grayling in the creek – during the summer of 2019 the Alsek RRC will retain EDI to continue follow up and monitoring work on the enhancement sites and Arctic Grayling populations in the creek.

A full annual report of this project done by EDI is available upon request.

Summary

All meetings and projects in which the Alsek Renewable Resource Council participated in were directly related to and consistent with our mandate as stated in Chapter 16 of the Umbrella Final Agreement. The ARRC's above mentioned activities and projects were and are consistent with our 2018/2019 workplan.

Reviewed and Approved by the Alsek Renewable Resource Council,



Mark Nassiopoulos
Co-Chair



Gary Darbyshire
Co-Chair