

Rat River Working Group (RRWG)

Public Meeting Minutes

Fort McPherson, NT

Date: June 20, 2012

Attendees:

Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Jeffrey Robert	Tetlit RRC	Bernice Francis	Public
Kyla Ross	Tetlit RRC	Mary Rose Koe	Public
James Andre	Tetlit RRC	Edna Nerysoo	Public
Georgina Neyando	Tetlit RRC	Dougie Wilson	Public
Wanda Pascal	Tetlit Gwich'in Council	William Nerysoo	Public
Johnny Charlie	Tetlit Gwich'in Council	Billy Wilson	Char Monitor
Mary Rose Tetlich	Public	Shaylayna Wilson	Youth
Sarah Snowshoe	Public	Janelle Vaneltsi	Youth
Annie Jane Modeste	Public	Amy Thompson	GRRB
Richard Wilson	Public	Kris Maier	GRRB
Jane Charlie	Public	Billy Archie	FJMC
Laura Firth	Public	Ellen Lea	DFO

1. Opening Remarks

- Call to order at 5:30pm
- Opening prayer
- Introduction and opening remarks

2. Presentation - Review of the RRWG and management process.

- Members and format
- Annual Harvest Meeting process
- Char monitoring program background
- Fall seine background

3. Presentation - Review of 2011 activities and data results

- Data results from the monitoring program
- Results from the fall seine
- 2011 harvest level

Question: In reference to the CPUE table what year was the voluntary closure?

Response: 2006-2008 was the closure. In 2008 CPUE increased which indicates the rise in the population seen in the 2009 estimate. It's never been really clear whether the population increase was due to decreased harvest or better habitat conditions, but the voluntary closure definitely helped.

Comment: The Shingle Point genetics work will continue for two more years to see if the stock contribution changes over time. The Aklavik HTC has agreed to apply 10% of the Shingle Point harvest *{as per the genetics results}* to the Rat River char harvest total and take that number off their total allocation.

4. Presentation - Review of population estimate and RRWG recommendations

- Population estimate
- RRWG voluntary harvest recommendation
- 2012 research (fall seine)

Comment: At the March RRWG meeting, 400 was the starting number but the Group decided on 375 therefore Fort McPherson has 75 *{out of 225 allocated to the communities}*, of which they would report to Billy so we don't go over 75.

Question: Did they find any char up at the Fish Holes in the summertime?

Response: Actually, yes. They sampled about 30 fish total and believed there may have seen as many as a hundred from the helicopter but high water prevented them from having good conditions. The char they sampled in July were about a month away from spawning, so they would theoretically spawn in mid August, about a month earlier than when the majority of Rat River char spawn. DFO also analyzed their otoliths and determined that some of the dead sampled fish had overwintered and not gone to sea that spring, so they had stayed at the Fish Holes for about 12 months. One fish though did go to sea that spring and returned by mid July so it just goes to show that they are doing a lot more than we think they are. While this is unusual, these fish seem to make up a small part of the population, so doing more research on them has been shelved for now. If more funding is available in the future, we could do a more in-depth study on these early spawners.

Question: Is there a water meter up there to track water level or temperature?

Response: Not yet, but we hope to get one up there like that eventually. We're working on ways to figure out how we could do that and how to pay for it. The monitors do keep track of water temperature and levels at their camps.

Question: Water is getting warmer all the time, is that bad for the char?

Response: Yes and no, unfortunately. Warmer summers can increase the amount of food available to char in the ocean and we've seen that trend in the size data over the years, but warmer temperatures in the rivers and spawning areas can kill juvenile char.

Comment: Much less water at the fish holes than in recent years is a problem.

Response: A Rat River habitat study is on the top of the GRRB staff priority list for next year.

Question: Does the community like the formula for the total recommended harvest and allocation among groups? This was decided by the Working Group but we want feedback from community members.

Question: What is the percentage of the population that gets harvested?

Response: 5%

Response: If those numbers are based on the population estimate then that's OK.

Question: How honest is the information we're getting from harvesters?

Response: We'll talk about that next in harvest reporting but it is pretty high. At Shingle Point, it was either 100% or really close to it. Where we lack a bit of info is from McPherson (because less people fish and fishing takes place away from the community) so any help you guys can give us with respect to reporting would be greatly appreciated.

5. Presentation - 2012 communications plan and harvest reporting

- Fishing methods
- How to report your harvest

Question: Was there any discussion on distributing monitors catches back to the communities?

Response: It hasn't been talked about today, but the Aklavik RRC requested that from John Carmichael (50% of John's monitor catch to be given to community members in Aklavik).

Response: Personally, I think Billy does a good job of getting char back to the community so I don't think we need something mandatory in place.

Comment: Brought up at the March meeting, not everyone can go down, set up camp, knows where to fish. It's a long way from the community.

Response: GHAP funds might be an option.

Comment: Based on the Shingle Point Harvest and Aklavik harvests, we may be able to do the same thing as we planned to last year. Say if Shingle or Aklavik don't meet their allocation, the McPherson harvesters can take the extra.

Response: That's definitely a possibility, but McPherson didn't even meet their allocation last year.

Response: Good that we're not meeting that allocation, better to harvest less than more so the stock stays healthy. The system is working well.

Comment: If McPherson harvesters aren't meeting their allocation, the monitors should be allowed to harvest the remainder of the allocation and bring it back to the community.

Response: Agree with that.

Response: If that is what the community and the RRC supports, then the RRC should work with the monitor for that to happen, making sure the total isn't exceeded. This is more of an RRC decision than anything else.

Comment: From DFO's perspective, the contract with the Rat River monitors is a only for the fish allocated for the monitoring program. The rest of the allocation is up for any community member to take if they wish.

Response: Exactly, there is nothing stopping a char monitor from harvesting char as a community member so long as the allocation isn't exceeded. But again, this is best left up to the RRC and the monitors to sort out.

Comment: So is there potential that some of Aklavik's allocation might come to us if they don't get all of them?

Response: Yes that is a possibility, but we will see how the summer goes, and that will have to be communicated and decided among the RRCs and HTC.

7. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.