



Committee for Cooperative Moose Management
Meeting Minutes (Final Version)
June 16, 2016
MB Sustainable Development Office, Lac du Bonnet

Present:

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| Brian Kotak (MBMF) | Cam Neurenburg (LdB Wildlife Assoc.) |
| Ron Missyabit (MBSD) | Kelly Leavesley (MBSD) |
| Earl Simmons (MBSD) | Stu Jansson (LdB Fur Council) |
| Jim Hoard (Pinawa Game & Fish) | Daniel Dupont (MBSD) |
| Ivan Lavoie (Sagkeeng FN member) | Gerry Arbez (MB Wildlife Federation) |
| Bob Austman (MBMF) | Ernest McPherson (Black River FN) |
| Orton Ramsay (Black River FN) | Neil Guimond (Sagkeeng FN member) |
| Jonathon Spence (BON) | |

1. Opening Prayer & Introductions –

Ernest opened the meeting with a prayer. All of the committee members introduced themselves.

2. Review/Additions to the Agenda

Brian reviewed the agenda. There were no suggested additions.

3. Minutes from the March 30, 2016 Meeting

There were no comments on the minutes from the last meeting.

Stu handed out an article on liver flukes to the committee. It was suggested that Brian write a letter to Minister with recommendations that the committee developed at the last meeting based on the results of the recent GHA26 moose population survey. The recommendations were:

1. MCWS to conduct a moose aerial survey in 2017
2. MCWS to meet with communities and stakeholders to explain the results
3. Produce a Moose News focused on the 2016 results and explanations.
4. Encourage continued participation in moose management actions.
5. Government to support non-government participants in aerial surveys
6. Investigate mechanisms responsible for lack of recovery of moose population

The letter should be cc'd to Rick Wowchuck. (Special Advisor to Cathy Cox).

4. Discussion on Future of MBMF Committee for Cooperative Moose Management

Brian led a discussion on the future of the moose committee. Without financial support, the MBMF can no longer continue to lead and chair the committee. Brian indicated that he has not received any firm commitment from the province on continued financial support of the committee. Cam asked the committee if the members see value in the committee continuing. There was strong agreement that the committee is very useful in bringing people together to discuss issues related to moose and to have a say in research, monitoring and developing management actions collaboratively. There is no other wildlife committee in the province like it.

Neil asked if Sagkeeng FN is on the MBMF Board? Brian indicated that they are not, although invitations to be on Board have been made annually to Chief and Council. Neil said that if province wants co-management of natural resources, First Nations must be at the table. The moose committee provides one type of mechanism to make this happen.

Johnathon stated that this committee is effective. As a result of the actions taken, he and his community members are seeing more moose. Cam mentioned that the MB Wildlife Federation is committed to idea that resource management must be shared between FN, Metis, and licensed hunters. However, there must be a mechanism to make this work. He sees value in the committee and a role for the committee to play in co-management. Ron indicated that he knows of no other venue like this committee. We may not always agree, but we work together. Ron insisted that closing GHA 26 to moose hunting was made easier because the venue provided by the committee. Ron also spoke about how the committee has promoted and facilitated reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. He suggested that the Pathways to Reconciliation Act has mechanisms.

There was a question about the functioning of the moose committee in western MB. They had financial support from province last year. Apparently, the western committee rarely met.

Ernest mentioned that he does not hunt anymore, but he and his community still rely on the resource (moose). He can't afford to buy meat at the store. Moose is a traditional food. Orton mentioned moose is very important to his as well. This committee is trying hard to make sure that moose will be in the region for the future.

Gerry stated that co-management is absolutely necessary. But where do you find it? Where are the examples? He stressed that it comes out of committees like this. Where will we go to sit down together and learn together in the future if the committee no longer exists? Would be nice to see 20 such groups in the province.

Brian indicated that the MBMF is at a point where the organization's future is really uncertain. The MBMF is living off of its bank account (no project money) and that this money will be used up by the end of this year. Brian indicated that in the absence of new funding for the committee, he will be stepping down as the Chair. In addition, we need to think about what organization or agency can take over the functioning of the committee.

Kelly indicated that there could be some money coming for the committee. There is some red tape and approvals to get through. The money is in their budget, but they need permission to spend it.

Stu indicated that he would like to see a longer-term commitment. Hard to get from the province. There was a question of whether the operations of the moose committee is an eligible activity under the Fisheries and Wildlife Enhancement Fund. More appropriate for a project that the committee would recommend.

Brian indicated that the MBMF Board will be meeting next week for the MBMF Annual General Meeting. The Board will likely be making a decision on if the MBMF will continue into the future. Brian will inform moose committee about MBMF board decision.

If the Brian will be stepping down as Chair, who will chair the committee in the future? MB Conservation chaired the committee in the past, but the committee preferred not having the province in charge of the committee. Ideally, the MBMF should continue to Chair the committee. Brian stated that in the absence of new funding, he could not commit to do this.

5. Process to Complete GHA 26 Status Report and Recommendations

We still have work to do on the development of the recommendations. The first part of the report (e.g., introductory sections) are already in draft form and has been given to the committee for their review this spring. These sections still need to be finalized. In particular, Brian would like input from MB Sustainable Development.

There was a question about just submitting the Status Report first, followed by the recommendations later. Committee members felt that there is more strength submitting both in one report.

The process to complete the status report and recommendations will need to be decided once a decision on the role of the MBMF is made at the MBMF AGM.

6. Updates and Project Planning

2016 Wolf Monitoring (Survey)

A wolf survey was conducted in mid February over 3 days. The Alaskan trackers were used to conduct the survey. They observed 65 wolves, and estimated another 26 wolves (through tracks). A total fall population estimate of 141. There are a few big packs in the southern half of GHA 26 (9-10 animals per pack)

Wolf densities (# wolves per 1,000 km²): 2016 – 19.7, 2014-14.8, 2013-19.0, 2012-17.6

The population and density has not changed much over the period of the wolf incentive program.

Trapper incentive program: % harvested 2012-45%, 2013-25%, 2014-31%, 2015-52%, 2016-35%. The program has not had a big impact on wolf population.

Is there a wolf survey scheduled in 2017? MBSD indicates that a survey will likely occur
What is the cost of wolf survey? MBSD will find out and provide the information to the committee.

Ivan indicated that it would be better to conduct the wolf surveys earlier (e.g., in Dec) when packs still together. Kelly indicated that the Alaskan trackers may not be available and snow conditions not adequate. Also trackers were involved in GPS collaring and this can not occur until later in the winter (e.g., Feb).

Stu indicated that it is better to reduce pack density than the number of wolves in each pack. The wolf incentive program likely did not have an impact on the overall wolf population in GHA 26 because the program did not specifically target whole packs.

A total of 4 moose were collared in 2016. 6 cows still with collars in spring 2016. Hoping to get funds to deploy many more collars on moose in 2017.

Wolf collaring – 11 collars on 5 packs now. 2017 will place another 11 collars. Daniel showed the GPS data from the wolves in each of the 5 packs. Some slight overlap between the territories of the packs. Sometimes the wolves are close to each other at the same time.

Kill sites – Daniel reviewed some of the kill site data. Of the sites examined, approximately 1/3 are moose kills, 1/3 are beaver kills, and 1/3 are all other species.

FWEF application – to purchase 20 moose collars. MBSD was going to put the application through MBMF, but MBMF not in a financial position to support it. MBSD will submit the application through Memorial University. Collar data will help understand habitat use. Collared moose also would help with stratification for the moose population survey. Therefore, could reduce aerial survey costs. Can help gauge how many moose are missed during a visual survey. Could have application too in other parts of the province. Daniel can circulate the proposal to the committee.

Would the committee be willing to be identified as a partner. Need a support letter?
Daniel to write and Brian to sign on behalf of the committee. Daniel to send draft letter to LdB Wildlife Association as well.

There was a question of whether West Nile virus can impact on moose? Unknown. MN may be testing for west Nile in moose that have died. Neil asked if hunters can collect samples for something like West Nile? Unsure. Maybe could give hunters a simple sample kit.

Moose Monitoring

Eastern region put in proposals for moose aerial survey in GHA 26 in 2017 (also GHA 17 a for moose, also elk pop'n in Vita area). At a recent meeting of wildlife managers, the highest ranking (priority) in province was the Qamanirjuaq barren ground caribou survey. 2nd highest was moose in GHA 21 in the interlake (considered to be more at risk than GHA 26 moose). 3rd was moose in GHA 17A. GHA 26 moose ranked last. Therefore, not planning on doing a GHA 26 moose survey this year. May not be able to get to GHA 17A. Duck Mountains and Porcupine Mountains will also be done this winter. Suvery budget of \$340K for big game (all unglulates). \$80K budget for wolves. Concern was expressed by some committee members that without a survey next year, it could be that the next survey is not for another 3 years. This means that a decision on hunting will not be made for 4 or more years.

Kelly stressed that it is not that last year was a bad survey, but that the results did not match our expectations. Cam asked that when there is an anomaly in the results, should we not follow up with another survey? MBSD - the decision as to which surveys to fund was not an easy one. MBSD believes in the results obtained for GHA 26. It was not a bad survey. While it was not what we expected, it is still the best survey technique to use. The case for redoing the survey in GHA 26 was based on the fact that GHA 26 is a special conservation area, not because the results are flawed. Flying another survey within 1 year could set a precedent as well.

Does MB Hydro have a requirement to do/fund surveys? No..

Consultations with Indigenous Communities

MBSD sent letters to the 4 FN communities following the moose population survey result. They did meet with some communities (key contacts/representatives for each community from Sagkeeng, Brokenhead and Black River). Have not met with Hollow Water yet. MBSD would like to get an idea what each community is thinking about next steps. But there is a need to get the info to them first.

Brian mentioned that Rene Barker passed away recently. He was one of the drivers for keeping contact with Hollow Water. When his health failed, the contact with the community was lost. Brian acknowledged the important role that Rene played not only in the moose committee, but to engage all FN communities in our region on model forest projects.

MBSD has \$ flowing for most communities for moose consultations except for HW and Brokenhead (but Brokenhead very soon though). Difficult to say when these meetings will be wrapped up, as it is difficult to schedule the meetings.

Cam asked if the communities will continue to honour the conservation closures?
Unknown. No feedback from communities so far.

Moose conference in Brandon

It was suggested that the committee should support a few people to go to this important conference, which is being held from Sept 6 to 10. There may be some funding for FNs to attend (funding from the conference committee). Anyone who is interested in going and being sponsored? Neil would be interested. Ernest expressed interest as well. Funds to be allocated from the committee's RBC account.

7. Next Meeting

To be determined following MBMF Board decision.