

CARCROSS/ TAGISH FIRST NATION MONITORING PROGRAM

FINAL REPORT 2012/13 Monitoring Program



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CARCROSS / TAGISH FIRST NATION



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Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board – Enhancement Trust Final Report

Project Title: Carcross/ Tagish First Nation Monitoring Program

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Carcross/ Tagish First Nation would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincerest appreciation and gratitude for YFWET's continuing support for our environmental monitoring program. We believe this program is providing our Heritage, Lands and Natural Resources department with indispensable information about wildlife on our traditional territory, recording land use activities, as well as identifying issues as they are occurring and working with the proper authorities to address possible solutions.

The monitoring of wildlife populations and activities that may impact their movement on the land fulfils CTFN's mandate for environmental protection, as well as executing the recommendations that have been put together by the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee. Your on-going support over the years have assisted with the viability of this program and is much appreciated. This generous support is acknowledged in our CTFN newsletter that is distributed to everyone in the community.

Abstract: The CTFN Environmental Monitoring Program is celebrating its 8th year for monitoring the Southern Lakes and the traditional territory of the Carcross/ Tagish First Nation. The 2012/13 monitoring program for Southern Lakes area of Yukon was designed to monitor wildlife through the collection of wildlife data and compiling harvest observations. This program will continue into the future indefinitely.

Project Objectives: The objectives of this program include monitoring wildlife populations, their movements and status, as well as any hunting, trapping and fishing activity in CTFN's traditional territory, with special intent to monitor such activities taking place on Category A lands. This collective information will be applied to internal adaptive management prescriptions, recovery recommendations and conservation of key wildlife species.

Project Activities: Monitoring teams followed designated routes (~20 established routes) via truck, ATV, snow machine or boat during our 2012/13 monitoring season. Each team is equipped with satellite phone, cell phones, GPS units, SPOT equipment, binoculars, cameras, reporting sheets, data sheets, clip boards, etc. These data and reporting sheets are filled in each shift and later entered into the CTFN wildlife monitoring spreadsheet.

CTFN employed two full-time monitors for the year, as well as one full-time seasonal employee, and one full-time student position. These positions benefit the community and the Southern Lakes as a whole through the continued monitoring of lands, as well as networking with the public and CTFN citizens, helping to provide information pertaining to best practices and identifying areas of concerns relating to harvesting practices.

A public education campaign, especially during hunting season, included posters, letters, signage, and local newsletter submissions were an essential part of this program and assisted with our Environmental Monitors to deliver and convey fundamental information pertaining to hunting and fishing on CTFN Settlement lands. Our monitors work closely with the Land Use Team and get direction as to which areas of the traditional territory are to be getting special focus from this monitoring program.

Continued on-going monitoring is essential to meeting CTFN mission and mandate for the protection of land and its resources. An extremely valuable aspect to this program is the fostering of inter-governmental relationships; CTFN is in regular contact with Department of Environment and the regional Conservation Officers sharing information obtained on these patrols. This working relationship is beneficial in identifying areas of concern on our land, as well as working together to protect and conserve the fish and wildlife. Contact between departments often occurs when a concern has been raised or land and resource based activities have been flagged, often noting illegal harvest or questionable activities in areas of concern (such as settlement lands).

Continuing concerns over the declines in moose population in the Southern Lakes is the current catalyst for action on CTFN traditional territory. We believe that active monitoring patrols helps to build a solid understanding of current population trends; this information is being gathered on a day-to-day and an annual basis, as opposed to 5 or 10 year wildlife surveys. This form of traditional knowledge assists our Land Use team and Heritage, Lands and Natural Resources department in making critical decisions regarding wildlife management.

The benefits from this program can be evaluated by recognizing that there is a continually heightened awareness from the public regarding the fact that our monitors are out on the land. This, we believe has resulted in increased "permission to hunt" requests by other First Nation hunters. It is through obtaining these "permission to hunt" requests that CTFN is able to estimate the numbers of moose, sheep and bears being harvested in our traditional territory. Also, because our monitors are the "eyes and ears" of the land, we are routinely informed of potential cases of over-harvesting of fish or illegal harvest in areas that we have not granted permission to hunt. This information is then taken to the regional Conservation Officers and we work as a team to put an end to these activities.

The Program: CTFN's Environmental Monitoring Program is well established, entering into its 9th year of operation, and is carried out on a year-round basis. CTFN has allocated a large part of its budget to ensure that this program continues and has the

resources to accomplish what is needed. I have attached our GL statement for the department 730 – *Wildlife Monitoring*. Please note that substantial cost of this program goes directly to wages and without the continued support of funding agencies such as yours, CTFN would have difficulty to carry on this rewarding and useful compilation of data and recordings. CTFN strongly supports the collection of this data and stores it in-house with the expectation of accessing and utilizing this valuable data in the future. Traditional knowledge is well known to be able to identify trends and issues; it is this proactive approach to information collection that is the foundation of this monitoring program. Each year numbers of wildlife seen are recorded, tracks observed are counted and geo-marked with GPS, numbers of hunters on the land are recorded, illegal or suspicious activities are noted (with that area becoming red-flagged for future monitoring efforts), as well as any changes to the landscape being noted.

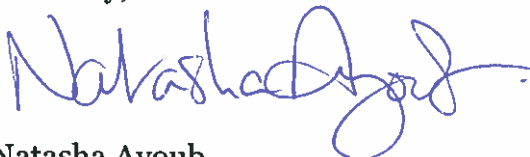
Our monitors are integrally linked with our Land Use Team and convey information pertaining to the changes they are witnessing on the land, either due to development activities or changes that may be stemming from climate change. This information is brought forward when the Land Use Team is reviewing land applications or considering activities that could potentially impact the fish and wildlife on the land. This information is up-to-date and current and has the benefit of “big picture analysis” because it is being collected on a daily basis throughout CTFN traditional territory.

Applicant Suggestions: Environmental Monitoring is necessary in order to discourage illegal harvest, to identify the effects of land-based activities, and works to expand communication between CTFN HLNR department and the public and CTFN citizens. Our Environmental Monitors are recording day-to-day activities that are occurring and potentially impacting our settlement lands. This information is crucial in making prudent land management decisions (in the absence of land use planning) and indispensable with respect to climate change.

CTFN will be applying for funding in order to continue our obligations to be stewards of this land and to carry out the CTFN mandate of protecting our natural resources.

We would like to thank you once again for your continued support – it is much appreciated!

Sincerely,



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