

1994 NWS&GC MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE: YUKON'S DALL SHEEP MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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QUESTION: Does your state or province have an identifiable sheep management program?

The Yukon Territory has a small, but identifiable sheep management program.

QUESTION: What is your guiding policy statement?

The greatest influence on the management direction of the Yukon's wildlife resources comes from the implementation of native land claims. General principles and obligations concerning the conservation of wildlife and habitat were adopted by the Government of Canada and the Council for Yukon Indians with the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) in 1990. Provisions within the UFA provide the mechanisms to implement wildlife resource management strategies in the Yukon.

The objectives of the UFA with respect to fish and wildlife conservation and use are as follows:

1. To ensure conservation in the management of all fish and wildlife resources and their habitats;
2. To preserve and enhance the renewable resources economy;
3. To preserve and enhance the culture, identity and values of Yukon Indian People;
4. To ensure the equal participation of Yukon Indian People with other Yukon residents in fish and wildlife management processes and decisions;
5. To guarantee the rights of Yukon Indian People to harvest, and the rights of Yukon First Nations to manage, renewable resources on settlement land;

6. To integrate the management of all renewable resources;

7. To integrate the relevant knowledge and experience both of Yukon Indian People and of the scientific communities in order to achieve conservation;

8. To develop responsibilities for renewable resource management at the community level;

9. To honour the harvesting and fish and wildlife management customs of Yukon Indian People and to provide for the Yukon Indian People's ongoing needs for fish and wildlife;

10. To deal fairly with all Yukon residents who use fish and wildlife resources in the settlement area; and

11. To enhance and promote the full participation of Yukon Indian People in renewable resources management.

QUESTION: How do/did you do management planning?

The first comprehensive species management guidelines are being drafted by a contract biologist (for consistency) in conjunction with the species biologists. The guidelines will be presented to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, an advisory body formed under the provisions of the UFA, for review and subsequent public comment.

QUESTION: What are your management goals?

The goals of the Yukon's sheep management program are:

1. To maintain healthy and reasonably abundant thornhorn sheep populations and habitats within the Yukon.

2. To achieve the conservation and sustainable use of thinhorn sheep and their habitat, providing long-term cultural, subsistence, recreational, and economic opportunities associated with hunting and viewing.
3. To educate people and instill public awareness of the value, ecology, and management of thinhorn sheep and their habitat.

QUESTION: What methods do you use to reach them?

The basis of our sheep management program is a conservative harvest regime supported by periodic population assessment. The licensed harvest is restricted to rams having obtained full curl or 8 years of age, and in some easily accessible areas, permits restrict the number of hunters. The characteristics of the harvested rams are closely monitored. In areas showing a declining age average or increased hunting effort, an aerial population census may be prescribed.

Careful review of land-use issues is the other method used to ensure the conservation of sheep populations. A lack of accessibility was the saving grace of most sheep populations through the Yukon's "frontier mentality" days. Development proposals which improve access receive particularly critical review, as do any agricultural applications which may potentially put domestic livestock in proximity with wild sheep populations.

QUESTION: How much effort is devoted to reaching them?

There is 1 full-time biologist with responsibility for sheep and goat management throughout the Yukon, with the bulk of her time currently devoted to sheep issues. Approximately 67,000\$Can is budgeted for personnel costs. As well, about 2 months per year of technical assistance is required during the hunting season to process the compulsory biological submissions. This adds another 10,000\$Can for a total personnel allocation of 77,000\$Can.

QUESTION: What is your operating budget for sheep management?

The operating budget is currently pegged at 32,500\$Can. Well over 90% of this is spent on

aircraft rental and fuel. The average total wildlife operating budget is 400,000\$Can annually.

Other Agency Participation in Sheep Management in the Yukon

The Canadian Parks Service spends 15,000\$Can annually on sheep-related issues. This includes salary and aircraft rental for population monitoring surveys, as well as the cost of an extended season at a visitor information centre. The Yukon's most easily accessed and well-known sheep viewing area lies within Kluane National Park Reserve. Sheep Mountain is an important lambing area, and an increased presence of park personnel is important both to educate the public and to protect the sheep from harassment.

Additional Funding and Foundation for North American Wild Sheep Participation

Outside funding is not routinely sought. The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep has supported projects in the past and has contributed approximately 10,000\$Can towards 3 projects in the last 10 years.

DISCUSSION

With the full-curl rule, sheep are often said to "manage themselves" and so the Yukon government has not devoted a lot of resources to their management. Yukon wildlife management is largely issue-driven and issue-specific. Sheep often take a back seat to caribou and moose, the principal subsistence species, and will probably continue to do so following the implementation of the UFA. The idea of "trophy management" or treating sheep as a "trophy species" may no longer be tenable in the current context.

While having 1 person responsible for the territory's sheep management program ensures consistency and standardized data acquisition, it often does not allow for more than a superficial understanding of local concerns and conditions. The problems are compounded by the fact that much of the "most current" information dates back to the 1970s.

The major challenge ahead will be to respond to increased information demands created by the 14 new local renewable resource councils without a proportional increase in funding. New strategies and techniques will have to be explored.