

## COASTAL HABITAT RESEARCH PROGRAM

### STEERING COMMITTEE

#### APPROVED MINUTES OF THE 1st MEETING HELD IN MONTREAL ON SEPTEMBER 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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<b>PRESENT:</b>	Alain Tremblay – Hydro-Québec Carine Durocher – Hydro-Québec Jean-Philippe Gilbert – Hydro-Québec Marc Dunn – Niskamoon Norman Cheezo – Eastmain Réal Courcelles – Hydro-Québec Robbie Tapiatic – Chisasibi Simon Marcotte – Hydro-Québec William Blackned – Wemindji
<b>ABSENT :</b>	Nadia Saganash – Niskamoon
<b>GUESTS:</b>	André Tessier – Hydro-Québec Fred T.S. Short – Consultant John Paul Murdoch – Niskamoon Louis Kanatawat – Chisasibi Roderick Pachano – Chisasibi Fred Short – University of New Hampshire

#### CHAIR AND SECRETARY

Mr. Murdoch chaired the meeting of September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Mr. Tessier acted as Secretary.

#### AGENDA

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The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. The Chair reviewed the agenda. He emphasized that the participation and involvement of the Crees of Chisasibi is crucial in executing this mandate, referring to Section 6 of the Agreement

Mr. Pachano said that he had many questions related to the Committee's jurisdiction and agenda and that he would like Crees to hold an in camera session.

In order to facilitate this internal discussion, HQ members left the room at 10:15 a.m.

The meeting with all participants resumed at 11:15 a.m.

Mr. Murdoch said that, as a result of the discussions that took place, the term “*sub-committee*” appearing in the Committee’s name on the agenda will be replaced by “*Steering Committee*” (SC). This will make it clear that the Committee is not subordinate to any other entity.

## **SC – 1 – 2016            INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS**

Mr. Murdoch asked the participants to introduce themselves. He added that pursuant to the *Agreement concerning Investigations into the Ecology of the Coastal Region of Eeyou Istchee and its Relationship with Wildlife Important to the Cree* (the Agreement), the Committee members include representatives from coastal Cree communities, Niskamoon and Hydro-Québec.

## **SC – 2 - 2016            REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT**

Mr. Murdoch reviewed the Agreement, which was distributed to the participants. In particular, he drew attention to Whereas no 4 of the Agreement, which states that “*Significant knowledge gaps requires the establishment of an in-depth large scale independent research program...*” which is the basis for the creation of the Steering Committee and its mandate.

In regard to Section 1a) of the Agreement, Mr. Murdoch said that a specific research study has been drawn up with Fred Short but that so far, no respective agreements have been concluded with Joel Heath and Collin Scott concerning studies set out in Sections 1b) et 1c).

Mr. Courcelles noted that Section 1 stipulates that the Comprehensive Program will *begin* with three studies, in the hope of obtaining government cooperation in carrying out further studies on waterfowl populations.

Mr. Pachano asked whether studies would also be discussed by the SC.

Mr. Courcelles answered that as is done on the Monitoring Committee (MC), the Steering Committee will discuss these studies and, based on the results it receives, will make decisions concerning the follow-up to be done on all studies. The researchers will submit their study proposal, which will be discussed by the members of the SC and approved, if warranted.

Concerning Section 2, Mr. Murdoch stated that past data does not preclude expanding the scope of the research to be carried out under these studies.

Regarding Section 5 of the Agreement, Mr. Courcelles explained that, during the EM1-A project, the members of the Monitoring Committee discussed the nature, scope and

content of the terms of reference for all studies. He added that Mr. Gilbert was asked to read Mr. Short's study proposal and discuss it with him. He emphasized that the terms of reference for all upcoming studies will have to conform to this collaborative approach with the Steering Committee.

Mr. Pachano added that we should make it clear that the SC is involved in defining the study objectives.

Under Section 7 of the Agreement, the effective rules and practices set out in the *Monitoring Committee Agreement* stipulate that documents must be forwarded at least two weeks prior to meetings and that the members will take turns acting as Chair. The fact that the rest of the procedures are flexible is what makes this Committee so successful.

Mr. Pachano, requested a copy of the *Monitoring Committee Agreement*.

Mr. Cheezo asked whether other stakeholder such as local CTAs could be involved and whether the information will be disseminated in Cree.

Mr. Murdoch answered that if other entities wish to participate, this could be included in the study terms of reference. He added that the study parameters and results will be presented in Cree in the communities.

The meeting paused at 12:00 a.m. and resumed at 12:45 p.m.

### **SC – 3 - 2016            MEASURES FOR CHISASIBI**

Mr. Murdoch reviewed Section 6 of the Agreement and emphasized that it contains specific measures relating to Chisasibi's participation in SC discussion. Furthermore, all of the information will be forwarded to the deputy chief de Chisasibi.

### **SC – 4 – 2016            INVOLVEMENT OF LAND USERS**

#### *Consultations and implementation of studies*

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Mr. Murdoch stated that the SC intends to regularly inform and consult with land users on the scope, execution and results of the study. He added that land users will also be invited to actively participate in the field surveys and share their traditional knowledge, as is done on the Monitoring Committee. Mr. Murdoch specified that land users will be considered to have the same level of expertise as the scientists involved in the studies.

#### *Traditional knowledge*

Mr. Pachano said that definition of “traditional knowledge” may pose a challenge and that it should be defined by the Crees rather than the non-Crees.

Mr. Dunn said that he is not a big fan of the exercise of defining traditional knowledge and that he does not like the word “traditional” because the new knowledge based on what the lands users knew and what they now see is equally valued as the traditional knowledge.

Ms. Durocher added that this is why the Monitoring Committee has chosen the term “Cree knowledge,” which is more encompassing.

Mr. Dunn said that three studies are planned at the start of the program, including two on the biophysical environment. He suggested that it might be a good idea to gather Cree knowledge for these studies.

Mr. Pachano said that Cree knowledge is required to form the basis of the research program and that scientific knowledge will complement; it is important to have information on what was and what is now. He added that land users can show us where the eelgrass is before it all disappears. The researchers have to understand that Crees have a holistic vision of the situation. It is also important to understand how the information will be used to re-established trust, since the information is often incomplete or twisted. Cree knowledge must be protected. In addition, it would be important to use the indicators the Crees use to evaluate the condition of the resource. A scientist might say that the eelgrass is healthy but for a Cree, if the animals that live on or use eelgrass are not present, it means that the plant has not yet fully recovered.

Ms. Durocher said that she share Mr. Pachano’s concern. She added that the MC has adopted a research protocol that includes a phase where the providers of the information validate the compiled and entered data to ensure that the knowledge has not been improperly recorded. Special protocols can also be established. She said that it is essential that Cree knowledge be gathered at the beginning of the studies to guide field research. In addition, it is important to take advantage of what was done in previous studies to avoid putting land users through too many interviews.

Mr. Murdoch said that Cree knowledge should not be used to defend a position. Therefore, perhaps we should consider training the interviewers to ensure that the research is unbiased.

Mr. Pachano added that the Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board (EMRWB) is working on research protocol that addresses ethical questions. People need to understand how the information will be used and how it will be preserved. It is also important to avoid asking the same question two or three times and to use validation to ensure that the information gathered is clear and complete. He said that care must be taken when interviewing elders.

Mr. Dunn said that Cree Knowledge should be gathered as of the beginning of the study program, since this knowledge feeds the research. Cree knowledge should be gathered

along the entire coast. The scientists should then provide feedback on the information gathered from land users and on what can be understood from it concerning the changes observed. He added that the research protocols must be flexible enough to incorporate land user's concern and suggestions, especially in the field. In this regard, the researchers are accountable to the tallymen.

Mr. Courcelles said that the questions must be vetted by the SC.

Mr. Pachano added that it is also important to translate both the questions and answers into Cree to ensure that they are clearly understood.

#### *Chisasibi Community Research Centre*

Mr. Murdoch said that if the SC discusses and agrees on the study protocols and questions, it can be assumed that the Chisasibi Research Center will be in good position to manage issues relating to data preservation and translation. The same may apply to other community.

Mr. Pachano said that the EMRWB could be useful in sharing resources or expertise. For example, the EMRWB provide funding to the CTA to hire a liaison officer in each community. However, the fund has to be related to off shore issues. We can look at how they and the local Niskamoon representative could be involved.

The meeting paused at 1:30 p.m. and resumed at 1:35 p.m.

#### **SC – 5 – 2016            EELGRASS RESEARCH PROJET**

Ms. Durocher asked how the SC would be involved in reviewing Mr Short's study mandate, since research for the study has already begun.

Mr. Murdoch said that due to time constraints, it was necessary to get started before this SC meeting because the research is a priority and is at the heart of the problem. Moreover, this research is the continuation of what has already been done and it is still possible to comment on all of it. The SC will discuss the results.

Mr. Fred Short presents an undated PPT entitled "*Eelgrass and the James Bay Ecosystems, Frederick T. Short, PH.D. – Department of Natural Resources and the Environment – Jackson Estuarine Laboratory, University of New Hamshire, Durham, NH, USA*". A copy is appended to the minutes. He explains the observations made on the Chisasibi coast in 2016, the possibilities for further research, the activities in progress and those he plans to carry out as part of the specific research study, for which the funding has recently been approved by the Niskamoon Corporation.

Mr. Gilbert informed Mr. Short that the available nutrients for eelgrass are being measured as part of the follow-up of the Romaine project. Mr. Short requested that the

measurement method used be forwarded to him, as he has not yet chosen the method he will use for his research.

Mr. Pachano asked how climate change will affect the decline in eelgrass.

Mr. Short responded that the impact is cumulative; more rain and storms produce more suspended sediment, which increases turbidity, which in turn reduces the amount of light getting through. All of these factors are likely to have an impact on eelgrass.

Mr. Murdoch stated that efforts are being made to identify the cause of the decline in eelgrass, as well as to identify possible ways of rehabilitating the eelgrass populations. He asked Mr. Short, who has recently returned from a trip to Chisasibi region, how he plans to bring the southern communities up to date.

Mr. Short answered that he will be there a little later this fall and that he wants to get land users involved in the field surveys.

Ms. Durocher said that the 2014 interviews showed that isostatic rebound exposed some eelgrass populations, or made the water too shallow for the plant to grow. Close attention must be paid to this factor when transposing previous data on eelgrass distribution onto the maps.

Mr. Pachano asked whether there are any plans to map the locations of the eelgrass populations in 1970, given that several locations suitable for eelgrass growth have been lost.

Mr. Short answered that yes they will be mapped.

Mr. Dunn said that it is important that Cree knowledge be considered, especially when land users are in the field with the researchers.

Mr. Short said that he will ask the land users to indicate the sites where there was eelgrass 30 years ago and that he will provide the participants with the tape recorders so that they can tape their comments concerning the sampling sites.

Ms. Durocher said that for the exercise to be relevant, the questions and work methods have to be standardized.

Mr. Pachano asked whether alternative sites where eelgrass could grow will be considered.

Mr. Short responded that these are solutions that could be examined.

Mr. Tremblay stated that he understands that in addition to the sites proposed by land users, Mr. Short will take other sites into consideration on the basis of scientific criteria.

Mr. Short said that this can be discussed while planning the 2017 field surveys. He added that the content of these surveys was discussed when he was in Chisasibi. Users of five traplines are interested in participating in the installation of measurement instruments and in the field surveys. He will soon hold discussion on this topic in Eastmain and Wemindji.

Mr. Durocher asked whether Mr. Short will submit a written research plan to the SC.

Mr. Murdoch answered that the SEC is responsible for developing the research plan.

Mr. Short said that what he has submitted are the avenues of research and that the signed contract covers the period from August 2016 to August 2017.

Mr. Courcelles added that the Agreement covers a three-year period and that it will be possible to readjust the study approach and procedure based on the results.

In response to Ms. Durocher's question, Mr. Short said that he will submit a work proposal with a description of the activities to be carried out in 2016 and 2017.

The meeting paused at 3:50 p.m. and resumed at 4:10 p.m.

## **ST – 6 – 2016            GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2016**

Mr. Murdoch reiterated that Mr. Short will submit a revised research plan, based on what he submitted to the Committee. He added that research plans are pending for three more program components i.e. land use, oceanography and waterfowl populations.

Mr. Dunn said that, thanks to independent funding (which includes a federal research grant), Joel Heath has already initiated research on the oceanography component, which focuses on major offshore water movements. He plans to extend this research to encompass the Cree communities south of Chisasibi. Input on salinity and inshore currents are required for Mr. Short's study.

Mr. Murdoch stated that it must be clear that the SC will be responsible for heading up the Comprehensive Program, not any of the researchers.

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Mr. Dunn said that he informed Joel Heath that the SC would not be able to discuss his study program during this meeting. He added that Mr. Heath does, however wish to hire the services of the research vessel Amundsen next year and that time is of the essence since the request has to be submitted this fall.

Mr. Murdoch said that he wonders whether the Amundsen's involvement in the program is relevant in ascertaining what is happening to the eelgrass.

Mr. Dunn said that installing a sampling station as close as possible to the mouth of the La Grande Rivière would make it possible to compare the coastal data with that collected offshore.

Mr. Tremblay said that there are pros and cons to using the Amundsen and Arctic Net. The advantage is that there would be access to data collected as part of these research programs on Hudson's Bay as a whole, which could be useful for subsequent analyses. The disadvantage is that it would be very expensive and the vessel, which is very large, would not be able to get very far down into James Bay. He suggested that an alternative might be to connect a sampling station to a community by cable and proposed giving the SC a presentation on this topic at the next meeting.

Mr. Murdoch said that the SC must first identify its needs and established the means by which to meet them. He concluded by saying that the Amundsen's services are not required this year. If needed, the vessel could be used when it is next in the area in 2019.

Mr. Murdoch reiterated that there are still two other study programs to be developed: one on land use and one on waterfowl.

Mr. Courcelles suggested that Mr. Gilbert develop an outline for a possible study on geese and said that he will contact the Canadian Wildlife Service to see if they are interested in participating in the Comprehensive Program. Ms. Durocher could do the same for land use.

Ms Durocher emphasized that it might be useful to develop a global research program that would make it possible to optimize costs and share data between the various studies, namely to avoid subjecting land users to over-consultation.

#### **ST – 7 – 2016            MEMBERSHIP FOR OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

Mr. Courcelles said that an effort should be made to involve the federal authorities, specifically the Canadian Wildlife Service, in the research program on waterfowl.

Mr. Pachano asked whether permits from any of the authorities are required to carry out the planned studies.

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Mr. Murdoch said that this question should be addressed when reviewing the terms of reference for specific research studies. He assumes that all authorities involved will inform the SC of any permit requirements.

Mr. Tremblay said that as far as he knows, a permit is required if wildlife specimens are sampled.

#### **ST – 8 – 2016            NEXT MEETING**



Mr. Murdoch said that the agenda and the research plans to be discussed will be forwarded to the participants before the next meeting, which will be held in Chisasibi on October 12 and 13, 2016.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'M' followed by a long, horizontal stroke that ends in a small loop.