

**COASTAL HABITAT RESEARCH PROGRAM**

**STEERING COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE 24TH MEETING**

**HELD BY CONFERENCE CALL ON OCTOBER 25, 2019**

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**PRESENT:**

Norman Cheezo – Cree Nation of Eastmain  
Réal Courcelles – Hydro-Québec  
Marc Dunn – Niskamoon Corporation  
Carine Durocher – Hydro-Québec  
Louie Kanatewat – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
John Lameboy – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
Geraldine Mark – Cree Nation of Wemindji  
Ernie Rabbitskin – Niskamoon Corporation  
Robbie Tapiatic – Cree Nation of Chisasibi

**ABSENT:**

James Bobbish – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
Félix Boulanger – Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board  
Angela Coxon – Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board  
Jean-Philippe Gilbert – Hydro-Québec  
Ernest Moses – Waskaganish First Nation  
Roderick Pachano – Cree Nation of Chisasibi  
Jean Rodrigue – Canadian Wildlife Service  
Emily Sinave – Cree Nation Government  
Nadia Saganash – Cree Nation Government  
Alain Tremblay – Hydro-Québec

**GUESTS:**

Mhaly Bois-Charlebois – Hydro-Québec

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

**Tuesday, August 20, 2019**

**10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

- 1) Fred Short - 2nd version of Final Report to Steering Committee
  - a. Review of excel worksheet
  - b. Steps to be taken with University of New Hampshire
  - c. Releasing final report to communities
  - d. Additional measures
  
- 2) Melanie Leblanc - postdoctoral fellowship proposal

## **CHAIR AND SECRETARY**

Marc Dunn chaired the meeting.

Mhaly Bois-Charlebois acted as Secretary. The meeting began at 10:19 a.m. on Friday, October 25, 2019.

## **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The Chair reviewed the agenda. No new items were added. Mr. Dunn explained that he would name one person at a time to talk in order to facilitate the communication given that the meeting was being held by conference call.

The participants agreed.

Mr. Dunn said that he sent the SC's comments regarding the report prepared by Dr. Short's team to the University of New Hampshire and that Dr. Short only addressed 13 comments. He said he revised the research protocol and the terms of reference to see what was covered by the report and said that, as shown in the appended Excel sheet entitled *Comments for final report - FINAL for SC - Including October 2019 revision & conformity analysis*, most aspects were not covered. Mr. Dunn said that among those aspects, the most notable are the two main research questions. He told the SC members that he would let them go through the Excel sheet. He added that, according to Niskamoon's contract with the University of New Hampshire, the final report can only be released once it has been approved by the SC. Mr. Dunn said that the purpose of the conference call was to clearly state whether the SC approved the report, to talk about how the communities will react and also to discuss the additional measures to be taken. He added that he would postpone Item 2 of the agenda as Melanie-Louise Leblanc told him she would wait before doing the proposal.

### **1) FRED SHORT - 2ND VERSION OF FINAL REPORT TO STEERING COMMITTEE** **a. Review of excel worksheet**

Robbie Tapiatic said that he does not know what to think anymore, because so many things are happening in this research. He said that Dr. Short avoided more than 90 questions. He added that the fact that Dr. Short signed an agreement with the Chisasibi Eeyou Resource and Research Institute (CERRI) to work with them for the interviews is unacceptable because that was not agreed to with the SC. Mr. Tapiatic said he does not know if the SC should agree to release the report if they do not agree with the content. He added that it seems Dr. Short is trying to rush publication. Mr. Tapiatic said that this report would also contradict everything that Dante Torio will do in the coming months. He said that his decision would be to release the report, but to include a statement from the SC. He said that someone could use this report against the SC in the future. He added that Niskamoon paid Dr. Short's team the most money of all the researchers working on the project for what he considers to be a high school report. Mr. Tapiatic said he is so discouraged that he thinks they should hire a lawyer.

Mr. Dunn said that if he understands correctly, Mr. Tapiatic agrees that the SC should not approve the report.

Mr. Tapiatic agreed and said that although he said some days ago that they should release the report, he has since reconsidered his position because Dr. Short has not been honest as a researcher. He added that the SC knows there are factors other than salinity affecting the eelgrass.

Réal Courcelles said that he agreed with Mr. Tapiatic in this regard. He said that the tricky part is that if they release the report as it is at the moment, they are essentially agreeing that certain topics have not been covered, and that the results do not support the conclusions. He said that it is like the SC is shooting itself in the foot. Mr. Courcelles said that they should send the report back. He said that they should send the letter William Macleod wrote (the letter is appended to the minutes) to the University of New Hampshire and tell them the SC will not approve the report as is. He added that even minor comments were not covered, and that the SC should request that all the comments be addressed. Mr. Courcelles said that, as for releasing the report to everyone, his recommendation would be to wait to have all the researchers' reports and release them all at the same time. He added that he is hesitant to send a report without the other results. He said that readers will take the results of this report as facts.

Carine Durocher said that she personally finds this report incomplete. She said that there will be consequences in both cases if they decide to release it or not. She said that she is more in favor of releasing it but also stating what the flaws are as well as which conclusions are not supported by the data. She added that, furthermore, they should say that the other researchers are investigating to complete the missing data so that people know that this report is just a preliminary step in the research and that a more complete answer will be provided at a later date. Ms. Durocher said that, in her opinion, not publishing it would be a lack of transparency. She said that she does not see anybody serious from universities considering this a good report. She added that it does not matter if the report is released within the scientific community, but regarding the release in the communities, it is up to the Cree representatives to judge.

To clarify what was said, Mr. Dunn asked Ms. Durocher if the SC approves the report.

Ms. Durocher answered that she agrees this report has flaws.

Mr. Dunn said that it is important to include the fact that the SC does not approve the report in the minutes before coming back to the University of New Hampshire.

John Lameboy said that he felt somewhat neutral about this report. He said that he did not want to say if the SC should approve the report or not. He added that some things in the report are true and that some are not true. He said he based his statement on his traditional knowledge.

Mr. Dunn said that he wanted to make something clear before continuing the discussion. He said that the issue is not to say whether or not they agree with Dr. Short's report. He added that they

want scientific research based on data and the problem is that he did not do that. He said that Dr. Short basically gives his opinion for 50 pages and that other researchers could have done that for less money.

Mr. Lameboy said that in this case, he would agree with Mr. Courcelles and wait until the other reports are ready before releasing this one.

Ernie Rabbitskin said that he does not accept the report, because from the moment Dr. Short's team was first on the field, there were already some points he did not agree with.

Mr. Dunn asked for some examples.

Mr. Rabbitskin said that some things happened a few times while training the Cree trappers and that he has never seen anything like that on the field before.

Mr. Dunn asked what Mr. Rabbitskin thought about the report.

Mr. Rabbitskin answered he would have to review it again.

Norman Cheezo said that he read the report and said that Dr. Short addressed the major question: why eelgrass is declining. He said that the point is he does not have concrete proof to support his comments. Mr. Cheezo said that, as Mr. Courcelles said, releasing this report would be like the SC is shooting itself in the foot. He added that they have to agree if it means they totally reject the report or if they use it as a base for further research. Mr. Cheezo said that once all the reports are released, and everything is combined, they will have a full report, but meanwhile, he believes they should wait until they have all the data.

Mr. Dunn said that they have to wait until the other researchers continue the research, and hopefully they will be able to use the data and continue the work. He said he did send the report to the other researchers and that they were in the process of looking at it. Mr. Dunn said that the eelgrass team said they really need to see the raw data to understand what can be used or not, and that Dr. Short's team had not provided that yet. He added he agrees that they should ask the University of New Hampshire for the data as soon as possible.

Louie Kanatewat said he absolutely agreed with Mr. Tapiatic when he said they should have a lawyer working on this file. He said that releasing the report without acknowledging the participation of the other researchers would look bad. He said that he was not happy knowing that Dr. Short is working with CERRI. He said that this will confuse the communities' members. Mr. Kanatewat said that the communities' members have known Dr. Short for a long time and that he has worked on eelgrass for many years, and that this is why he is really not satisfied.

Geraldine Mark said that everybody was saying what she was thinking. She said she agreed with Mr. Rabbitskin that Dr. Short did some strange things concerning the training. She added that Dr. Short's team did not even give the trainees access to the iPads. She said that when his team

did the work in Wemindji, they only went to one area where they normally find eelgrass and did not go to other traplines or areas. Ms. Mark said that he did not check all the traplines. She said she did not agree with the report, but that she thinks they should at least release something for the tallymen, such as a table, so that they can have some results. She added that this report should be considered a mid-term report instead of a final report.

Mr. Dunn thanked the participants for having taken the time to look at the report. He said he agreed it is a difficult situation. He added that, speaking for himself, he was not quite sure if they were doing the right thing. Mr. Dunn said that Dr. Short clearly does not intend to meet their expectations, so he felt disappointed. He said that the letter Mr. Macleod wrote says the SC will release the report. He added that he felt they should say that while they want to be transparent, they do not feel it is the right time to release the report. Mr. Dunn said that, as Ms. Mark said, they could release the results for the traplines for which data exist. He added that they will say in the letter that they need the raw data for the other researchers to be able to work.

Mr. Courcelles said that sending this kind of table could be a compromise. He said that the SC needs to send a letter to the University of New Hampshire, and that Mr. Macleod's letter should say that when the SC gets the final report, with the corrections made, it will be released at the same time as the other reports, at the end of next year.

Mr. Dunn asked if all the participants agreed.

All the participants agreed.

Mr. Dunn said that he would need some time to revise all the notes and the letter. He asked if all the participants agreed that the SC and Niskamoon needs a lawyer for this issue.

All the participants agreed.

Ms. Durocher said that this process will be difficult. She said that it will question how the SC addressed the comments and questions to Dr. Short and how they will receive feedback. She added that the decision is up to the Cree representatives, but that the process will be a tough ride.

Mr. Dunn said that the whole research process with Dr. Short has already been tough.

Ms. Durocher agreed, and added that it will continue. She said that it is very complicated if, as Mr. Tapiatic said, CERRI hired Dr. Short, and that on one side, the SC wants to hire a lawyer, and that on the other side, he is still working with Niskamoon funds.

Mr. Dunn said that he was not aware that CERRI had hired Dr. Short. He said that this needs to be discussed with the lawyers. He said that Niskamoon will stick to the proposal, pay for Dr. Torio, but not pay for Dr. Short. He added he agreed with Ms. Durocher that it complicates things. Mr. Dunn asked the participants if they had something else to say and said that the discussion is

not over. He added that members should feel free to correspond by email and that they would surely have more discussions about this in Halifax.

Mr. Cheezo asked if it would be possible to have a face to face meeting in November.

Mr. Dunn asked if the 21st would work and said he would confirm.

Mr. Cheezo asked Mr. Dunn if he could find out if Dr. Short is really working for CERRI.

Mr. Dunn confirmed he would.

**b. Steps to be taken with University of New Hampshire**

This item was covered in Point a.

**c. Releasing final report to communities**

This item was covered in Point a.

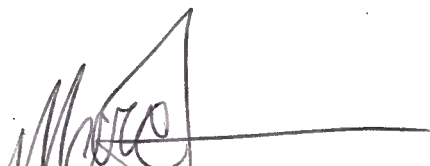
**d. Additional measures**


This item was covered in Point a.

**2) MELANIE LEBLANC - POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL**

This point was postponed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

  
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Marc Dunn, Chair of the meeting

  
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Mhaly Bois-Charlebois, Secretary