

Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op

Information Sharing Protocol

March 2004

Preamble

This protocol should be viewed within the context of the Borderlands Co-op's goals as stated in its constitution.

Co-op Goals:

- a) To monitor and assess ecosystem changes in the range of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and adjacent coastal and marine areas;
- b) To encourage use of both science-based studies and studies based on local and traditional knowledge in ecological monitoring and ecosystem management;
- c) To improve communications and understanding among governments, aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and scientists with regard to ecosystem knowledge and management; and,
- d) To foster capacity-building and training opportunities in northern communities in the context of the above-listed goals.

The Borderlands Co-op's Communications Strategy also provides context for this protocol. (The Strategy was developed at the 7th Annual Gathering and finalized in 2002, and is available in full at: www.taiga.net/coop/business/CommunicationsStrategy.pdf.) The Strategy describes the importance of communication of results from the Borderlands Co-op's programs:

The information gathered by the Co-op through its programs, once analyzed, must be communicated. Internally, it should be communicated to Co-op members, the board of directors and the people who participated in the surveys. Externally, this information should be used in several ways. It should be distributed to the communities where the information was gathered and for whom the information is most relevant. It should also be distributed to the academic and research community, in the interests of sharing knowledge and spurring further research. It should be available to a wider audience through the Co-op's website, and through public information campaigns. Finally, the information gathered by the Co-op should be shared with governments, co-management organizations, and other policy and decision-makers, so as to influence policy and improve management decisions.

The Borderlands Co-op has no mandate in legislation or land claims agreements, and no direct management or decision-making role with respect to any matters pertaining to the conservation of wildlife. It documents, manages, examines and communicates a range of information related to ecosystems and sustainability.

The Borderlands Co-op operates through the voluntary co-operation of individuals, agencies, boards, councils, academic institutions in north-western Canada and Alaska. Its primary contacts at the community and regional level are Renewable Resource

Councils, Hunters and Trappers Committees and co-management boards and committees. These organizations provide in-kind and/or financial support, as do several government agencies and academic institutions. The majority of the funding is from government agencies, especially Environment Canada, supplemented with project funding.

The Borderlands Co-op's programs are guided by a Board of Directors (established through a non-profit society) and through direction given at the Annual Gatherings. In general, the Borderlands Co-op is an informal organization that operates, with no full-time staff and limited resources, but with a strong commitment from the participating organizations. Its strength is in its ability to adapt and to be responsive to needs and opportunities that arise in the study of environmental change.

In keeping with the goals and the organizational nature of the Borderlands Co-op, this protocol is intended to:

- Encourage the dissemination and use of the Borderlands Co-op's information and of the results of other monitoring and research programs
- Respect the right to confidentiality of individuals who are interviewed through the Community-based Monitoring Program
- Ensure that the participating community organizations retain control over the release of information from the Community-based Monitoring Program.

The Borderlands Co-op's Information

1. Information about past studies and current research and monitoring

This includes contact information, summaries, compilations and discussions of information available.

2. Indicators of ecological change

Records and interpretations of monitoring data (not collected by the Borderlands Co-op). The Borderlands Co-op works with the data holders to produce indicators in a format that includes a presentation of the data (usually a graph) and a short description of the significance of the data.

3. Results from the Community-based Monitoring Program

Documentation of observations, and associated interpretations and knowledge, of people who spend time on the land. This is mainly through annual interviews conducted by local contractors in each community. In each community a local organization (Renewable Resource Council or Hunters and Trappers Committee in Canada) assists with the selection of the contractor and develops or approves the list of people to be interviewed. Interviewees are people who have been out on the land over the preceding year; they range in age from youth to Elders.

The information documented in these interviews is entered into a database. Information recorded on the accompanying maps is also put into a computerized system.

The observations and interpretations are about:

- weather, changes in climate and the environment (such as water levels and permafrost), how observed conditions and changes affect plants and animals and how they affect people's ability to get out on the land to hunt, fish , trap and pick berries.
- levels of human activities (such as ATV use, air traffic, oil and gas exploration and development) and the effects of these
- berries, fish, caribou, other animals: observations about such aspects as quality, health and abundance, and whether people met their subsistence needs
- general observations about changes in the environment and in the communities – this includes observations about cultural changes and impacts of changing economies.

It is equally important to note what information is outside of the scope of this monitoring program.

The Borderlands Co-op does not ask for or document information on:

- numbers or locations of animals harvested (except in relation to observations of sick animals)
- traditional medicines
- places of spiritual importance and traditional use
- Elders' stories or life histories
- Traditional practices (such as hunting methods or food preparation)

(Note: The Borderlands Co-op operates in predominantly aboriginal communities and an important component of the Borderlands Co-op is the treatment of traditional ecological knowledge. The people interviewed annually are aboriginal people. However, there has been discussion and recognition at Gatherings that observations of non-aboriginal local people could also be included in this program. This may be a consideration especially for development of the program in Inuvik, which has a significant non-aboriginal population.)

Procedures for Review, Approval, Management and Communication of Information

1. Information about past studies and current research and monitoring

This information is in the public domain. The main format that the Borderlands Co-op uses for this information is the "Arctic Borderlands Database of Information Sources" found at: www.yukon.taiga.net/borderlands which contains (in February 2004) 789 records of research and monitoring projects, programs and other related information for the Arctic Borderlands region. This database is jointly developed and maintained by the Borderlands Co-op and the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope).

When summaries and discussions are prepared on this type of information, they are presented under the author's name: "Prepared by (name of author) for the Arctic Borderlands Ecological Knowledge Co-op, (date)".

There are no restrictions on the communication of this information.

2. Indicators of ecological change

People working on behalf of the Borderlands Co-op will work with data holders to develop and update indicators. In general indicators are reviewed and approved by the data holders before they are made available to the public. The data holder or published data source are referenced for each indicator. In some cases the datasets are already published and require little interpretation (for example, Canada census figures); in these cases acknowledgement of the source is the only requirement.

There are no restrictions on the communication of this information.

3. Results from the community-based monitoring program

Informed Consent

Interviewers ensure that people being interviewed understand the purpose of the program, the protection of confidentiality, where the information is stored, and how the information is used. Before the interview starts, the interviewee signs an 'informed consent form' that contains this information. One copy of this form is retained by the interviewee, and one copy is retained with the Borderlands Co-op's records.

For the purposes of this protocol, we distinguish two forms of information that results from this program:

A. Raw Results

This is the information compiled directly from interview forms, tapes, notes or maps, either in its original form or in electronic format, or printed format.

1. Raw results are stored and displayed in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the interviewee
2. Raw results are owned by the Borderlands Co-op, and the primary information holders are the participating community organizations. The full dataset for each community is kept (in one or both of electronic and printed formats) in the office of that organization, for use in the community. The Borderlands Co-op office maintains a complete archive of the raw results. Original papers and maps will continue to be kept in the Borderlands Co-op's office or in an archive facility, unless the participating community organization requests to have them returned to the community.
3. Requests for copies of the raw results may be directed to the Borderlands Co-op office or to the participating community organization. Approval from the community organization is required for the release of the raw results. This approval could be on a case-by-case basis or through a general policy. The decision is up to the community organization.

B. Results Summaries

This is information that has been summarized on the basis of a community and a year, and possibly combined or compared across communities and years. It may

contain sample comments or quotes from interviews or meetings. It may be just summarized, and it may be discussed in relation to other types of information that are related (for example, observations on when whitefish are mushy might be discussed in relation to air or water temperatures.) These summaries are prepared by staff of participating organizations, or by Borderlands Co-op staff or contractors (including the interviewers), and they could be in any format (including reports, posters, web pages, school curriculum materials; oral, slide or video presentations.)

1. Summarized results are displayed in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the people interviewed.
2. When results summaries are prepared, revised or updated, they are first labelled "DRAFT (date)" and freely circulated for review (and presented and discussed at meetings).
3. Periodically, draft results summaries are forwarded from the Borderlands Co-op office to the participating community organizations for review. A period of at least one month (or less if this is mutually agreed upon) is allowed for review. The letter accompanying the draft materials must state the review period and indicate that the material will be widely distributed following the review period. Comments and suggested revisions are incorporated into the final materials wherever possible. If specific material is considered not appropriate for general distribution, then it will be omitted, and an explanatory note may be inserted.
4. Following this review, there are no restrictions on the communication of the results summaries.