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Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board

Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

November 18, 2016

Re: QWB's submission for in-person public hearing on Admiralty Inlet and Eclipse Sound Summering Narwhal Stock Total Allowable Landed Catch

QWB's comments will concentrate on the proposed reduction of Eclipse Sound summering stock total allowable land catch (TALC) rather than the Admiralty Inlet summering stock. QWB will also be raise questions in this submission and would appreciate responses to its questions. QWB feels theses questions require adequate responses prior to NWMB forwarding its decision/recommendation to the DFO Minister.

This submission will echo QWB's position and concerns raised during the written hearing on "Flexible Quota System and Carry Forward Policy"

Eclipse Sound Summering Stock
QWB will raise some key points for consideration on the Eclipse Sound summering stock and proposed decrease of TALC 236 to 134.

1. Scientific Study:

- The most recent DFO led aerial surveys of Eclipse Sound were in 2004 and 2013.
- LGL Limited conducted their own surveys for three consecutive summers, from 2013-2015, as part of Baffinland Environmental Impact Statement to Nunavut Impact Review Board.

These two studies have important conclusions. The DFO survey is indicating reduction in population from 2004 to 2013, while the LGL survey indicates the population has been stable and there have not been changes in density or abundance. QWB believes it is important to understand the differences between these two studies. The 2013 DFO study did not repeat surveys over the same area and could have been affected by daily movements of narwhals and reaction to killer whales or ships.

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- 2016 Survey: DFO recently completed another survey this past summer. These survey results have not been published.

It is QWB opinion that NWMB should defer its decision until the 2016 survey results are published and compared with the results of both the LGL Limited results and DFO 2013 survey. Doing so would ensure NWMB makes a sound and informative decision/recommendation to DFO Minister.

QWB has obtained a copy of the LGL limited published report, but does not have the expertise to do a comparison of these reports. QWB continues to rely on NTI's expertise and advice for these two reports.

2. Predation

Inuit continually raised the issue of predators and its effects on the migration and population of any wildlife species. Since predation is classified as non-human caused effects, the scientific community considers these impacts as not impacting the overall results. QWB believes that these non human cause effects do influence the overall "estimate" population. The Mittimatalik HTO has made this point in a letter dated May 2016 regarding the 2013 survey.

Qikiqtaaluk Inuit continue to report seeing more killer whales, and continue to comment that this increase is having considerable impact on marine species. QWB agrees with this statement and believes DFO should concentrate why these populations are increasing, and the impact these killer whales have on the population and migration of narwhals.

3. Shipping Traffic

It is a well-known fact to Inuit that marine species are greatly impacted by any noise. This fact has been recently confirmed by the scientific community. QWB believes the shipping traffic for the May River Ore Project may have impacted the 2013 study; the narwhals may have been in a different area because of the traffic in the eclipse sound later in the summer, which would have been after the aerial survey was completed.

4. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

QWB feels Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit should play a key part in the decision making process especially for Eclipse Sound stock. QWB also believes NWMB has a

responsibility to listen to the community as they are the ones present in the area year round for many generations.

With NWMB conducting IQ interviews and transcripts now being provided, these interview transcripts provide tremendous information on narwhals around Eclipse Sound and should inform the decisions being made in this hearing.

5. Status of Baffin Bay population

The population estimate is over 140,000 and Inuit harvest less than 1% of the population, not factoring in the impact of killer whales and other predators. QWB does not feel that there is a conservation concern with this population and has been asking the question on several occasions, and now is formally asking NWMB: since narwhals are listed as ‘special concern”, what is the target number in order for the narwhals to be managed and also to be unlisted from the Species at Risk Act? All co-management partners should have this conversation.

Admiralty Inlet Summering Stock

QWB supports the proposed increase of Admiralty Inlet summering stock TALC.

In fact, QWB recommends NWMB consider combining the two summering stocks into one with Admiralty Inlet and Eclipse Sound. QWB appreciates a decision such as this will require further consultation, and more questions will need to be answered. This should be considered a separate issue.

Conclusion:

- QWB recommends the decision for the proposed changes to Eclipse Sound TALC by DFO be deferred until all survey results are available; and
- NWMB compares the results to the DFO led 2013 survey and the LGL led surveys. Doing so will ensure its decision is made with well informative process. This is important, as any ill-informed process will have a huge negative impact for the Inuit and community of Pond Inlet.

James Qillaq, Chairman
Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board