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Minista Avatilitjutiutut
Minister of Environment
Ministre de l'Environnement

FILE

RECEIVED MAY 01 2007

April 30, 2007

RECEIVED APR 10 2007

Joe Tigullaraq,
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
P.O. Box
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

Re: Request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board on a management response to conservation concerns with the Baffin Bay (BB) Polar Bear Population

Dear Mr. Tigullaraq;

As you are aware, and as described in the attached request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), there are conservation concerns with the Baffin Bay (BB) polar bear population.

The concern is that the population has declined, and the levels of Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) are not sustainable. As such, there is a conservation concern that at present TAH levels the BB polar bear population is declining, and a management action is necessary. Therefore, the attached request for a decision of the NWMB is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per Article 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA).

I request that that the NWMB make a decision on this request in sufficient time for a management action to be implemented prior to the start of harvesting next years harvesting season, on July 1, 2008.

The attached request for decision provides a number of options for the NWMB to review when considering this request. I of course recognize that the NWMB is in no way bound or obligated to decide upon any of these options, and will make the decision it deems appropriate.

As you know the BB polar bear population is shared with Greenland, who on their own initiative have implemented reductions in harvest, and all polar bear populations are covered by the International Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and Their Habitat. By ensuring that this population does not further decline we seek not only to protect the long term interests of Inuit harvesters who depend on bear hunting, but also the interests of all Nunavummiut and other jurisdictions who have an interest in responsible wildlife management.

If your staff has any questions about this request or require additional information they should contact Drikus Gissing, Director, Wildlife Management Division.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Patterk Netser



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: A management response to conservation concerns with the Baffin Bay polar bear population.

Background:

In December 2004 the NWMB increased the TAH for the Baffin Bay (BB) polar bear population. Since that time new information in the form of higher than expected harvesting levels by Greenland has been received. Simulations using this new information indicates that the population has declined in number, and at the present TAH level is being over harvested and will continue to decline.

The new information is in the form of harvest records from Greenland. They have provided information stating that their actual harvest was much higher than we had expected. Based on these harvest levels it is estimated that the BB population has declined from 2100 in 1997 to about 1500 at present due to the combined (Nunavut and Greenland) effects of over harvesting.

Until 2006 Greenland did not have any quantitative limits on harvesting. Greenland has since implemented a quota system that involved a phased reduction in harvest in each of four years from 2006 to 2009.

Working through the federal Department of Environment and Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we have initiated discussions with Greenland to establish a management agreement for shared populations of polar bears. The NWMB has been kept up to date with current information on these discussions.

Consultations:

In the fall of 2005 consultations were done with the communities that harvest from this population. These consultations occurred as community and HTO meetings with Pond Inlet, Clyde River, and Qikiqtarjuaq.

The opinions expressed by local hunters is not in total agreement with the scientific information. In general they do not believe there has been a reduction in the populations, and do not support any reductions in TAH. The reasons for this difference in perspective were discussed but not resolved. It may be that climate change has altered polar bear

distribution patterns and behavior giving the impression that there are more bears and more bear-human encounters. Consultations were completed before the December 2005 NWMB meeting, and the NWMB was provided with a summary of the discussions at that meeting. An English transcript and summary of the BB consultations is available and has been provided to the NWMB staff.

Recommendations:

That the NWMB make a decision on a management response to the present conservation concerns with the BB polar bear population. As per the attached letter, this request for a decision is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per section 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. As such a decision of the NWMB is requested in sufficient time for management response to be implemented by July 1, 2008.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 - Options for a management response to the conservation concern with the Baffin Bay population of polar bears.

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NOTE: The present TAH for the Baffin Bay polar bear population is 105 annually. Each of the following options is a proposed reduction from that number. New information on this population is being developed through ongoing and planned research being conducted by the Department of Environment. As this information is reviewed and analyzed, the NWMB and the Minister of Environment will be more informed and in a better position to again consider the TAH for this population.

Option 1

Return to the historical TAH of 64 per year beginning with the 2008/2009 harvest year.

Option 2

Return to the historical TAH of 64 per year beginning with the 2008/2009 harvest year. Then implement a phased reduction of 5 per year until the TAH is reduced to 50% of the current BB Maximum sustained yield (45 per year at current numbers or less than 45 per year if the population continues to decline).

Option 3

Return to the historical TAH of 64 per year beginning with the 2008/2009 harvest year. Then implement a phased reduction of 5 per year until the TAH is reduced to 50% of the estimated 90% harvest risk level (34 per year at current numbers or less than 34 per year if the population continues to decline).

Option 4

Beginning with the 2008/2009 harvest year impose a harvest moratorium in BB (reduce the TAH to 0) until the population has increased to the target number of 2074 polar bears, as identified in the MOU.