



by its Executive Committee in December 2020 to assert that the *Nunavut Agreement* intended to give primacy to Inuit systems of wildlife management. In its submission, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board stated that “science and scientific systems of wildlife management are not specifically recognized or mentioned in Article 5 of the *Nunavut Agreement*”.

At the NWMB’s March 10, 2022, In-Camera Meeting (IC001-2022), the Board made the following decision:

RESOLVED that, Pursuant to Section 5.2.34(d)(i) of the *Nunavut Agreement*, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board is not ready to modify the management system for Baffin Bay narwhal at this time.

Furthermore, the NWMB understands and acknowledges concerns that assumptions used to determine narwhal stock boundaries and the harvest allocation model used in the 2012 integrated fisheries management plan (IFMP) for the Baffin Bay narwhal population do not reflect Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit for narwhal movement. The NWMB confirms its willingness to receive updates to the IFMP that address and accommodate these concerns. The NWMB advises all co-management partners we will be particularly alert to assessing potential impacts of any proposed revisions or alternatives to the narwhal harvest allocation system on the conservation purpose of the current system, and on harvesters.

Reasons for NWMB Decision

In reaching its decision, the Board considered the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board’s submission, oral and written submissions from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) staff, and oral submissions from co-management partners.

The narwhal IFMP

DFO developed the narwhal IFMP through a consultative process that included input from all co-management partners. The main objectives of the narwhal IFMP are to maintain vital, healthy narwhal populations capable of sustaining harvesting needs while respecting the *Nunavut Agreement* and Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s precautionary approach to wildlife management. Based on the narwhal IFMP, the Baffin Bay narwhal population is managed as four individual stocks (East Baffin Island, Eclipse Sound,



reference to potential future by-laws detailing its authority to allocate harvest and how their proposed management system would mitigate the risk of local depletion, which is an important conservation purpose justifying the current approach to management units in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. The NWMB is also concerned that potential impacts to harvesters in the Kitikmeot Region are not adequately understood or addressed.

Response from parties

The NWMB received submissions from other co-management partners at its Regular Meeting in March 2022. The NWMB heard from representatives of the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB) who were uncertain about potential negative impacts on Kitikmeot narwhal harvesters. KRWB stated that they desired more information on the potential impacts of the QWB proposal on the Somerset Island stock before they can decide if they support it. The NWMB accepts that the KRWB was not given sufficient time to study, understand and respond to the QWB’s proposal.

The NWMB considered submissions on the QWB proposal from DFO. DFO raised concerns about potential impacts on harvesting in other regions, possible impacts on the sustainability of the flexible quota system and the possibility of local depletion.

Co-management partners also raised possible implications of the QWB’s proposal for the international trade of narwhal products from Nunavut. Work is underway within DFO to review this concern and technical advice on the risk of a non-detrimental finding under CITES is pending.

The NWMB is concerned that making changes to the narwhal integrated management system at this time may have negative consequences to narwhal conservation, particularly if a viable alternative management system (including the necessary by-laws) is not available for the NWMB to review and consider when the proposal is received.

Primacy

In its proposal, the QWB asserted the intended “primacy” of Inuit systems of wildlife management as a justification for its proposal to remove existing conservation measures. When asked about this legal position, neither the QWB representative nor their legal counsel chose to provide any response. The NWMB acknowledges the



primary role Inuit have in wildlife harvesting in Nunavut.¹ Article 5 recognizes the need for an effective system of wildlife management that recognizes Inuit systems of wildlife management that contribute to wildlife conservation.² However, without further explanation, the NWMB is not persuaded by the QWB’s argument of primacy for Inuit systems of wildlife management in this case.

The *Nunavut Agreement* calls for wildlife management that *recognizes* Inuit systems that contribute to conservation. While addressing Inuit rights, the NWMB takes significant account of conservation principles when making its decisions. The NWMB understands its wildlife co-management mandate requires accounting for both Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit *and* science (science is a fundamental feature of modern conservation and conservation is a critical objective of the NWMB’s wildlife management mandate). A combination of both worldviews tends to form the basis for NWMB decisions depending on the circumstances. However, the NWMB is not able to support a proposal that relies on an assertion of Inuit “primacy” without that position being explained.

By-laws

The NWMB makes decisions on the information before it. There were no QWB by-laws on narwhal harvest management provided to the NWMB for review. In this case, the QWB proposes an as-yet undrafted RWO by-law to replace an existing narwhal management system. The NWMB concerns itself with the effectiveness of any proposed management system that intends to satisfy a conservation purpose. There are unresolved questions about the specific mechanics of the proposed approach beyond the contributions of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to the definition of narwhal stock boundaries. The input of co-management partners is essential to the success of the Nunavut wildlife co-management system. Understanding the scope and content of a proposed approach to conservation requires co-management partner input and NWMB review. A proposal must be sufficiently developed for the NWMB to be confident it can achieve its intended aims. As submitted, the QWB proposal is not able to do so.

Co-Management

The QWB proposal does not appear to have made material changes to a similar proposal submitted almost two years ago. In this current proposal, the QWB relied on

¹ NA, s. 5.1.3(b)(ii)
² NA, s. 5.1.2(e)



Conclusion

The NWMB supports a collaborative approach with respectful communication on the revision of the IFMP and calls on co-management partners to make a sincere effort at constructive dialogue. Going forward, the NWMB intends to have a more active role in contributing to the work of the narwhal working group. NWMB calls on co-management partners to consider the evidence about narwhal locations and stock definition presented by the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board during work to revise the narwhal IFMP. Inuit evidence about current narwhal stock definitions in East Baffin Island, Eclipse Sound, Admiralty Inlet and Somerset Island, with potential implications to the harvest allocation for those narwhal stocks, must be seriously considered as part of the IFMP revision process.

The NWMB looks forward to your reply and completion of the *Nunavut Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact the NWMB.

Sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

cc: Gabriel Nirlungayuq, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



June 10, 2022

Mr. Daniel Shewchuk
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
Box 1379
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Shewchuk:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 14, 2022 in which you conveyed the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB) decision with respect to the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board's (QWB) Request for Modifications to the Baffin Bay Narwhal Management System. I wish to commend the members of the Board and its staff for the thorough and thoughtful analysis that has informed the Board's decision:

“RESOLVED that, Pursuant to Section 5.2.34(d)(i) of the *Nunavut Agreement*, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board is not ready to modify the management system for Baffin Bay narwhal at this time.”

Pursuant to Section 5.3.18 of the *Nunavut Agreement*, I accept the Board's decision to not modify the management system for Baffin Bay narwhal at this time.

I am pleased to learn of the NWMB's intention to take a more active role in the work of the Narwhal Working Group. In my view, a collaborative co-management review of the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for Narwhal in the Nunavut Settlement Area (IFMP) offers a better approach to exchange information and develop recommendations collaboratively. I look forward to the outcome of this review, and the recommendations proposed to better reflect the most current information from all knowledge streams, especially Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit pertaining to narwhal movement.

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My department remains committed to working with all Nunavut co-management organizations to make resource management decisions that respect the *Nunavut Agreement* and include the best available knowledge sources and systems. I look forward to our continued collaboration in the co-management of the Nunavut narwhal fishery.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Murray', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Honourable Joyce Murray, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard