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Nunavummi Anngutighatigut Aulapkaijikut Katimajiat
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

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Conserving wildlife through the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific knowledge

Lab 27, 2023

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Διεύθυνση Απόρρητου

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Daniel Shulman

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March 27, 2023

Honourable Joanna Quassa
Minister of Environment
Government of Nunavut

Dear Minister Quassa:

Re: Government of Nunavut's Proposal to Increase the Total Allowable Harvest for Muskoxen in the MX-11 Management Unit from 225 to 300

NWMB Decision

At the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB) Regular Meeting (RM001-2023) in Iqaluit on March 8, 2023, the Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment recommended that the Board modify the annual Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for muskox in management unit MX-11 from 225 to 300. The Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organization, and the Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization recommended that the Board modify the Total Allowable Harvest from 225 to 350. All parties agreed that the population of muskox in MX-11 have increased and that a an increase to the Total Allowable Harvest would not cause a conservation concern.

During the NWMB's In-Camera Meeting (IC001-2023) on March 8, 2023, the Board considered the Government of Nunavut's proposal and oral evidence and arguments presented by the parties present and made the following decision:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to Sections 5.3.3(a), 5.6.16, and 5.6.17(b) of the Nunavut Agreement, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board approves the modification of the Total Allowable Harvest from 225 to 350 muskox for the MX-11 management unit.

Reasons for NWMB Decision

Evidence of population increase

In reaching its decision, the Board relied on written and oral evidence and arguments provided by co-management partners. The question before the Board was to modify the Total Allowable Harvest for muskox in the MX-11 management unit. MX-11 lies on the Nunavut mainland, north of the Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary and south of the Northwest passage. Nunavummiut harvest muskoxen in the MX-11 management unit from Kugluktuk, Cambridge Bay, Omingmakto, and Bathurst Inlet. The Department of Environment conducted an aerial survey to estimate the abundance of muskoxen in MX-11 in 2022. The survey yielded an abundance estimate of



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10,246 (SE= 2,309.6, CV= 20.4%). The previous study in 2013 resulted in an abundance survey of 7,500 muskoxen. Therefore, the 2022 population abundance estimate suggests the herd in this area has increased in size by over 2,700 muskoxen since 2013.

During its Regular Meeting, the NWMB listened to oral submissions from the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board, Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTO), and the Kugluktuk HTO. The Kugluktuk hunters and the Kugluktuk HTO informed the Board that harvesters in their community have been observing more muskox in MX-11. They also stated that harvesters from nearby communities in the Northwest Territories had told them about increased observation of muskox in the area where muskox had previously been less common.

Total Allowable Harvest

A Total Allowable Harvest of 225 was established when the management unit was created in 2015. The Total Allowable Harvest has never been reached. The Total Allowable Harvest is allocated to Kugluktuk (120), Cambridge Bay (25), Omingmaktok (40), and Burnside (40). Neither the Government of Nunavut nor Inuit have expressed any conservation concerns with the current level of harvest. Both the Government of Nunavut and Inuit agree that the Total Allowable Harvest should be increased. The Government of Nunavut recommended a Total Allowable Harvest of 300 to maintain the current removal rate of approximately 3%. The Government of Nunavut stated that a removal rate of 3% is needed to allow for a continued increase in abundance. Representatives of Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk HTOs and the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board recommended the Total Allowable Harvest be increased to 350 to:

- Prevent future disease outbreaks that may result from a high density of muskox;
- Provide alternative country food sources for their communities given limited access to caribou in the area; and
- Reduce competition between muskox and caribou for the same food resources.

At the NWMB's Regular Meeting, the Government of Nunavut stated they are not concerned with a Total Allowable Harvest of 350 for MX-11.

The Board asked the representatives of the Kugluktuk and Cambridge Bay HTOs why they had not used all of their community's allocation in the past. The Board heard from Kugluktuk that it is logistically challenging to manage the tags to allow harvesters a reasonable amount of time to harvest while ensuring that as many people as possible get an opportunity to harvest. They also said that harvesters sometimes voluntarily cease harvesting by mid-April when females get ready to calve. The Cambridge Bay HTO noted they passed a motion to disallow harvesting muskox on Victoria Island during the calving season from April 15 to July 15.



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Other issues

The Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization said they were not satisfied with the consultation. They stated that the Department of Environment had not shared the survey report. They also stated that the absence of detailed information makes it difficult for them to prepare their recommendations to the NWMB on the matter. They also recommended the Department of Environment improve the disease monitoring program by providing more sample kits and increasing incentives. The Board recommends the Minister consider and address these concerns and requests.

Board determination

The Board was persuaded and relied on evidence from the Government and Nunavut co-management partners that the population of muskox in management unit MX-11 has increased since the last survey in 2013. Considering that all parties agreed that a Total Allowable Harvest of 350 would not cause a conservation concern, the Board decided to modify the Total Allowable Harvest for muskox in Management unit MX-11 from 225 to 350.

Conclusion

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

Sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

cc: Drikus Gissing, Director of Wildlife Management, Government of Nunavut.



◀Δn◀ 13, 2023

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‘**ପ୍ରକାଶନ ମଧ୍ୟାମ୍ବିଦୀ ପରିଷଦ୍ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷମାନ**’ ଏବଂ ‘**ପ୍ରକାଶନ ମଧ୍ୟାମ୍ବିଦୀ ପରିଷଦ୍ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷମାନ**’ ଏବଂ ‘**ପ୍ରକାଶନ ମଧ୍ୟାମ୍ବିଦୀ ପରିଷଦ୍ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷମାନ**’

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John Depp

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April 13, 2023

Mr. Daniel Shewchuk
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
P.O Box 1379
Iqaluit, NU
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Dear Mr. Shewchuk:

Re: *Government of Nunavut's Proposal to Increase the Total Allowable Harvest for Muskoxen in the MX-11 Management Unit from 225 to 300*

Thank you very much for your decision concerning the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for the Central Kitikmeot Muskox Management Unit MX-11.

To reiterate the decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB):

RESOLVED that, pursuant to Sections 5.3.3(a), 5.6.16, and 5.6.17(b) of the Nunavut Agreement, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board approves the modification of the Total Allowable Harvest from 225 to 350 muskox for the MX-11 management unit.

I hereby accept your decision to increase the TAH for the Central Kitikmeot Muskox Management Unit (MX-11) from the current 225 to 350 muskoxen. We will take steps to implement this decision for the 2023-2024 Harvest Year which begins on July 1, 2023.

On-going communication, meetings, and the recent NWMB Regular Meeting when this issue was discussed, have shown that we are all concerned about muskox populations. I



trust that our collaborative work will continue in implementing this management action to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Central Kitikmeot muskox subpopulation.

Sincerely,

Joanna Quassa
Minister of Environment

Cc. Jimmy Noble Jr., Deputy Minister, Department of Environment