SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information: **Decision: X**

Issue: Approval decision of the Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) (Northwest Atlantic population) Action Plan.

Background:
The Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population) was assessed by the Committee of the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as an Endangered species in 2002 and added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk List in 2005. The NWMB was notified of the COSEWIC assessment and asked to make a decision on listing in 2004. The NWMB was also asked about and approved a Recovery Strategy in 2007 which was made official in 2010. As an Endangered species, the requirement under the *Species at Risk Act* calls for the creation of an Action Plan within five years of listing.

Article 5.2.34 (d) (i) of the Nunavut Agreement states that the NWMB shall, at its discretion, approve plans for management, classification, protection, restocking or propagation, cultivation or husbandry of particular wildlife, including endangered species. Details of how to achieve approval of management plans, recovery strategies and action plans are not addressed under the 2008 "*A memorandum of understanding to harmonize the designation of rare, threatened and endangered species under the Nunavut Lands Claim Agreement and the listing of wildlife species under the Species at Risk Act*".

The Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population) Action Plan (Executive Summary attached and translated into Inuktitut) outlines what needs to done to begin or further support the strategic direction set out in the Recovery Strategy. As the Blue Whale is a rare visitor to Nunavut waters, no work has been carried out in this area and little is planned. The Action Plan outlines what needs to be done in areas most frequented by Blue Whale. As part of the process in creating an Action Plan, the NWMB is requested to review the proposed document and provide any comments. The Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board is also being requested to review the Action Plan.

Recommendations:
The NWMB review the Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population) Action Plan, provide any comments to DFO and decide whether or not to approve it by April 2016.

Prepared by:
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Date:
02 February 2016

Executive summary – Action Plan for the Blue Whale (Northwest Atlantic population)

The Northwest Atlantic blue whale was listed as endangered under the *Species at Risk Act* in 2005. The main threats to its recovery are anthropogenic noise, lack of food availability, contaminants, collisions, disturbances and entanglements. Published in 2009, the Recovery Strategy proposed three recovery objectives intended to increase knowledge of the population, its habitat, and threats, and implement measures to mitigate threats.

The action plan for the Northwest Atlantic blue whale presents measures that will be implemented in the short and medium term to assist in meeting the recovery objectives. The first set of recovery measures will be undertaken by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, sometimes with the collaboration of partners. These are primarily research measures to estimate the population's size and its use of Canadian waters. They also aim to implement or enforce legislation or policies to protect blue whale habitat and mitigate threats.

The second set of measures will be undertaken by the Department in partnership with the various stakeholders involved in the blue whale's recovery. For example, these measures include research on krill and the use of hydroacoustics to document the presence of these whales. The third set presents measures that concerned stakeholders could undertake voluntarily. Such measures include gathering observations of the blue whale, photo-identification and raising awareness among marine users.

The measures set out in the action plan could affect some stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations or the shipping industry. However, their implementation would not necessarily result in incremental costs to these stakeholders. Canadian society as a whole would benefit from the implementation of the action plan, given the economic value that Canadians attach to the recovery of the species and the protection of its habitat.