

# SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR

**Information:**

**Decision: X**

**Issue:** A decision is needed to approve/not approve the “Recovery Strategy for Northern Wolffish (*Anarhichas denticulatus*) and Spotted Wolffish (*Anarhichas minor*), and Management Plan for Atlantic Wolffish (*Anarhichas lupus*) in Canada” and the “Action Plan for the Northern Wolffish (*Anarhichas denticulatus*) and Spotted Wolffish (*Anarhichas minor*) in Canada”.

**Background:**

In May 2001, Northern Wolffish and Spotted Wolffish were assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as Threatened due to declines in their abundance and biomass. A third species, the Atlantic Wolffish, was assessed by COSEWIC as Special Concern. All three wolffish species were included in Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) at the time of the Act’s proclamation in June 2003.

A Recovery Strategy/Management Plan was prepared for these three species in 2006 and the NWMB was asked to make a decision to approve or not approve the “Recovery Strategy for Northern Wolffish (*Anarhichas denticulatus*) and Spotted Wolffish (*Anarhichas minor*), and Management Plan for Atlantic Wolffish (*Anarhichas lupus*) in Canada”. The NWMB approved the Recovery Strategy/Management Plan in 2007, and it was then finalised in 2008. When Northern and Spotted wolffish were listed as Threatened, *Species at Risk Act* required the creation of an Action Plan which would outline a detailed path to recovering the two species.

An updated version of the Recovery Strategy/Management Plan was prepared for the three wolffish species as well as the required Action Plan for the Northern and Spotted wolffish. Consultations on these documents took place with Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTO) and the fishing industry from July through September in 2015, but few comments were received. The comments received from HTOs indicated that wolffish are not fished for by community members, and therefore they had no comment. Both documents were brought to the Board for approval in September of 2016, at which time the Board requested that review occur until the documents have are considered final. The documents are now are considered final.

The final recovery strategy and action plan (marked as proposed until the Board makes a decision) provides the general and detailed information that supports the recovery of the wolffish species. While the recovery strategy points out the general knowledge gaps in species biology or management which are required to aid in recovery, the action plan describes the specific measures that will provide the best ways to increase this knowledge, reduce threats and monitor the species.

Most of the work on wolffish continues to take place in southern areas where the species are more plentiful, but much of the general knowledge being gained is applicable to the north. No critical habitat for these species has been identified in Nunavut waters. The mandatory release of Northern and Spotted wolffish upon capture continues, and captures take place almost exclusively by the commercial fishing industry.

A summary of consultations with Nunavut communities in 2015 and their responses is included. As part of the process of updating the Recovery Strategy/Management Plan and creating an Action Plan, DFO is requesting that the NWMB review the final documents, provide any comments, and state whether they approve of these documents.

**Recommendations:**

The NWMB review the updated “Recovery Strategy for Northern Wolffish (*Anarhichas denticulatus*) and Spotted Wolffish (*Anarhichas minor*), and Management Plan for Atlantic Wolffish (*Anarhichas lupus*) in Canada” and the “Action Plan for the Northern Wolffish (*Anarhichas denticulatus*) and Spotted Wolffish (*Anarhichas minor*) in Canada”, provide any comments to DFO and it’s decision.

**Prepared by:**

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**Date:**

August 2, 2019