

**SUBMISSION TO THE  
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**FOR**

**Information: X**

**Decision:**

**Recommendation:**

**Issue: Update on the Co-Development of the Nunavut Fishery Regulations**

**Background:**

The co-development of the Nunavut Fishery Regulations with Inuit is a long over-due commitment of the Government of Canada. Fisheries in the Nunavut Settlement Area (NSA) are still managed under existing regulations that do not fully reflect nor fully implement Inuit rights and the unique fisheries management regimes as outlined in the *Nunavut Agreement (NA)*. New regulations are required to provide consistency with harvesting rights and wildlife management systems established under the *NA*, to provide an opportunity to advance Canada's reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities, support the Inuit Nunangat Policy to advance Inuit self-determination, and create a modern fisheries management regime to ensure the sustainability of fisheries in the NSA.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) welcome this opportunity to provide an update on the status on the proposed Nunavut Fishery Regulations (NFRs). This update builds upon the updates that were previously presented to the Board during the October 2024 and June 2025 meetings.

The Nunavut Fishery Regulations Working Group (NFRWG) is comprised of members from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, NTI, Makivvik, Cree Nation Government (CNG; joined fall 2024) and the Government of Nunavut (GN). The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB or the Board), Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) and the Eeyou Marine Region Wildlife Board (EMRWB; joined in early 2025) sit as observers. The NFRWG successfully co-developed the Policy Intentions Paper (PIP), which describes the policy and management objectives of the proposed regulations, in December 2024.

**Engagement with Rights-holders and Stakeholders**

The completed PIP was distributed externally in early 2025 to inform consultations with rightsholders, stakeholders, and other levels of government. Regional engagement sessions were completed in March and April in Nunavut to present the PIP and solicit Inuit input from Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs) and Regional Wildlife Organizations (RWOs) to further inform the future regulations. The engagement sessions were generally well received with participants providing positive feedback on the proposals, particularly around proposed mechanisms to support Inuit-led fisheries management at the community level (i.e., Communal Fish Plans (CFPs)); with capacity/funding noted as a potential challenge. Efforts are also underway with Makivvik and the CNG to deliver engagement sessions to their respective regions/communities this fall/winter.

DFO will provide updates on the NFRs to the Anguvigaq in Nunavik and Nunavut Regional Wildlife Organizations Annual General Meetings between October and December 2025.

DFO will also continue to engage others outside the NFRWG who are likely to have an interest in the new policy and future regulations to ensure awareness, understanding, and to receive relevant feedback, including the Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene, Athabasca Denesuline, Nunatsiavut Government, Attawapiskat First Nation and the Muskegowuk Council.

DFO will take advantage of the various advisory committee meetings in 2026 to provide an update to the Eastern Arctic Groundfish Stakeholder Advisory Committee and the Northern Shrimp Advisory Committee.

The NFRWG will develop “What We Heard” reports from engagements with each key rights-holder and stakeholder group, to share internally and publicly. The first of these from the Nunavut engagement sessions will be finalized and available in late September 2025.

### Detailed Regulatory Design Process

A core aspect of NFRs co-development is what has been termed the “detailed regulatory design” (DRD) process. This is essentially a collaborative approach by the NFRWG to develop detailed content for the regulations. Preparing the DRD requires developing more detailed policy on key NFRs design features, such as the CFP, as well as completing a comprehensive line-by-line analysis of the existing regulations (*Northwest Territories Fishery Regulations, Marine Mammal Regulations, Atlantic Fishery Regulations*) and prior Board/Minister decisions applicable to the NFRs area of application, to reach agreement on which rules are currently in force and what should happen to each of them. The options are:

1. Retain the rule and if retaining, decide where to “house” it. Options for housing the rules may include stating them directly in the NFRs, in a “Northern Agreement Decision-Making Order”, in licence conditions (where licences are a lawful tool), or in some cases DFO may be able to make the rule enforceable without stating it in any of those documents.
2. Retain the rule but modernize and/or modify language and/or content (content changes would be submitted to the relevant wildlife management board for approval).
3. Apply to the relevant wildlife management board(s) to remove an existing rule.

It is anticipated that the DRD will be completed by March 2026.

### **Advancing the Communal Fish Plan Concept**

The CFP is a new tool that the NFRWG is proposing Inuit use to manage their own fisheries. It is being proposed as an alternative to fishing licences, especially for Inuit commercial fishing. HTOs and RWOs would adopt CFPs to manage Inuit “Bulk Sales” fisheries that Inuit have the right to pursue without a licence and potentially also fisheries that DFO could otherwise manage with a licence.

CFPs would need to respect all Board-Minister decisions, including any Total Allowable Harvest/Basic Needs Level and non-quota limitations. In order to provide Inuit with the freedom to establish and set harvest limits for new fisheries or expand existing fisheries, an application would go to the NWMB to **not** carry forward Schedule V of the *Northwest Territories Fishery Regulations* into the NFRs, other than the mesh size rules. The Schedule V quotas and fishing seasons would instead become background information to guide future DFO advice and decisions about commercial fisheries, while the NFRs would retain the mesh net sizes currently in force.

This past August, DFO, NTI, and the Pangnirtung HTO partnered to pilot a CFP for some of the community's Arctic Char fisheries. A CFP was developed and DFO met the current legislative requirements by authorizing the fishery using an Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licence. The intention of the pilot is to learn, from a real-life example, the scope of work involved, potential costs, and other HTO/harvesters needs, and to identify challenges that may arise before the NFRWG finalizes the CFP policy. Future pilots may be considered for other communities and other species. The goal is essentially to achieve proof of concept.

DFO, NTI and the Pangnirtung HTO will be meeting this fall to discuss how the 2025 Arctic Char fisheries pilot went. Early indications from the Pangnirtung HTO is that members were pleased with how the fishery operated.

### **Amendments to the *Nunavut Agreement***

The *NA* will need fisheries-specific amendments to allow for CFPs and their enforceability. NTI, DFO, and the federal Department of Justice have started meeting to identify the necessary changes to Article 5 to support the proposed NFRs and to develop appropriate text. DFO is keeping Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) up to date, and CIRNAC is expected to start joining the discussions soon. Nunavut Agreement amendments must be developed in parallel with the DRD because the legislative drafters will need a high degree of certainty about the treaty text in order to draft regulations that fully respect it.

### **Next Steps:**

Work will continue on the DRD and *NA* amendments over the coming months. DFO will continue engagement sessions with rightsholders, stakeholders, and other levels of government with the intent to have those completed by March 2026.

In the meantime, DFO and NTI invite Board Members to ask any questions about the policy proposal that the NFRWG has developed so far and to identify any issues that you believe should be considered in developing the DRD and *NA* amendments.

Prepared by: NTI and DFO

September 16, 2025