



April 14, 2022

Hon. Joyce Murray
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Government of Canada

Dear Joyce Murray:

Re: NWMB Decision on Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board's Request for Modifications to the
Baffin Bay Narwhal Management System

NWMB Decision

At the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB or Board) Regular Meeting (RM001-2022) on March 9, 2022, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board presented a proposal requesting the Board to approve changes to the narwhal management system for the East Baffin Island, Eclipse Sound and Admiralty Inlet management units.

In its submission to the NWMB, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) proposed the following modifications to the narwhal management system:

1. Combine East Baffin Island, Eclipse Sound and Admiralty Inlet management units into one management unit referred to by the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board as Northern and Eastern Baffin Island (NEBI);
2. Establish a single Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for narwhals in the waters of Northern and Eastern Baffin Island by merging the current TAHs for the narwhal stocks of East Baffin Island, Eclipse Sound and Admiralty Inlet;
3. Continue the allocation of 104 migratory season tags from the Somerset Island stock to two Qikiqtaaluk communities: Pond Inlet (53) and Arctic Bay (51);
4. Remove the seasonal non-quota limitation and establish one annual hunting season;
5. Enable the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board to allocate the proposed NEBI TAHs among the six affected Hunters and Trappers Organizations (HTOs);
6. Support the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board's and HTOs' jurisdictions to establish by-laws;
7. Continue to carry-forward unused allocated tags from one year to the next for each HTO.

The Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board's submission relied, in part, on a legal position adopted





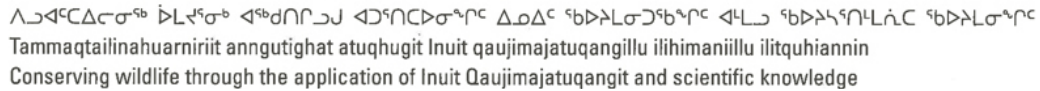
Admiralty Inlet and Somerset Island). This management strategy is intended to reduce potential local depletion. In addition, the division of the harvest season into a migratory and a summer season and the use of that harvest allocation model are intended to reduce the risk of over-exploitation that may occur when a smaller stock is assumed to be part of a larger and wider-ranging population. In 2012, the NWMB decided and the Minister accepted, to approve the narwhal IFMP on the condition that it be reviewed in 2017.

QWB Proposal

The QWB's proposal reflects concerns expressed by Inuit regarding the narwhal harvest management system. The QWB challenges the current definition of narwhal summer aggregation areas, arguing that the 2012 delineations and underlying assumptions do not reflect Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit of narwhal behaviour. Over the course of NWMB proceedings on narwhal management, including the 2012 IFMP proceeding, the NWMB has heard Inuit consistently share that narwhal move from one area to another during the summer. The NWMB understands Inuit have pointed out the delineation of summering stocks relied on a relatively small number of satellite tags and raised concerns about the reliability of the harvest allocation model assumptions.

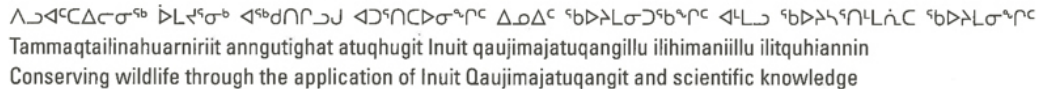
The NWMB is aware that since 2012, new science and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit information is now available, and a review of the narwhal IFMP is already overdue. The NWMB acknowledges that Inuit systems of wildlife management must be recognized in the Nunavut wildlife management systems, including the narwhal IFMP. The QWB and its constituent Hunters and Trappers Organizations express frustration with a narwhal management system that co-management partners increasingly accept needs to be updated. The longer this process takes, the more time passes since 2017 when the review was expected. Co-management partners need to take these concerns seriously and address themselves to make changes where warranted. The NWMB is aware that DFO has initiated a co-management working group to review the narwhal IFMP. The issues raised by the QWB are crucial for co-management partners and particularly for DFO to consider as the work of the working group proceeds. The NWMB supports a collaborative review process that considers and uses available Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

The QWB request to amalgamate management boundaries, remove non-quota limitations and to discontinue the use of the harvest allocation model represent significant changes to the narwhal management system and as proposed, they are to occur all at once. The QWB has not sufficiently explained how key features of their proposal would be implemented. This includes the justifying of its proposal with





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In this decision, the NWMB provides its perspective on these key issues as the review proceeds. The current narwhal conservation system seems to be generally functional, is now under active review and draws its origins from a decision made after a co-management proceeding. The issues involved in narwhal management are also complex. Changing one part of the system, such as the definition of stock boundaries, will impact other parts of the narwhal management system. Those impacts require adequate explanation, or at least additional time for co-management partners to understand. The NWMB will not remove a conservation measure without a better understanding of the impacts of what will replace it. In this case, the QWB has not met the burden of introducing sufficient evidence to support its application.



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Nunavunmi Anngutighatigut Aulapkaijitkut Katimajiat
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

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Tammaqtailinahuarniriit anngutighat atuqhugit Inuit qaujimajatuqangillu ilihimaniillu ilitquhiannin
Conserving wildlife through the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific knowledge

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 Qaujimajatuqangit 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 stroke extending to the right.

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