

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
Meeting - June 24, 2026

FOR

Information: X

Recommendation:

Decision:

Issue: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) – Fisheries Management (FM) Operational Updates

Marine Mammals:

1. Beluga: Belcher Islands – Eastern Hudson Bay (BEL-EHB)

- In 2025, 424 and 35 beluga (all stocks combined) were harvested by Nunavik and Sanikiluaq hunters, respectively. This represents approximately 118 and 20 beluga from the BEL-EHB stock.
- DFO Science and Fisheries Management staff travelled to Sanikiluaq in March to meet with the HTO and present the results of the 2025 BEL-EHB beluga stock assessment (presented to the NWMB in February 2026).
- A Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) regional peer-review took place in March 2026 to update the latest stock assessment based on 2025 harvest levels, and refine our understanding of the spatiotemporal distribution of beluga in different parts of their range during different seasons, Results are expected to be shared in summer 2026,
- The Nunavik Beluga Management system is set to expire on January 31, 2027. DFO are aiming to bring co-managers from Nunavik and Nunavut together to discuss management of the shared stock.

2. Narwhal

- The total reported landings for Narwhal management units in the 2025/26 harvest season were: Jones Sound 9, Smith Sound 0, Northern Hudson Bay 202, Somerset Island 45, East Baffin Island 70, Admiralty Inlet 194, and Eclipse Sound 215.
- The annual in-person Nunavut Walrus Working Group occurred in Iqaluit, NU on February 10-11, 2026. The meeting was very productive, and the working group tentatively plans to submit a Request for Decision to the NWMB at its November meeting to alter the narwhal management system for Baffin Bay communities during the 2027-28 season. This draft system would involve distributing all-season and transferable tags to the communities and using a post-season analysis by DFO to determine usage of each stock.
- A Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) regional peer-review meeting occurred in March 2026 to review two narwhal topics:
 - The first reviewed updated stock abundance estimates from the 2023 High Arctic Cetacean Survey. The publications will include updated

abundance estimates for the four Baffin Bay narwhal stocks, as well as the putative Jones Sound and Smith Sound stocks.

- The second reviewed updated population abundance, probability of decline and limit reference point (LRP) for Northern Hudson Bay Narwhal. An LRP marks the boundary between the cautious and critical zones under DFO's Sustainable Fisheries Framework, and the Framework requires the development of LRPs for key regional fisheries.
- The Science Advisory Reports and Research Documents from these CSAS meetings are expected to be published later this year.

3. Walrus

- The total reported subsistence landings for walrus within the Nunavut Settlement Area for the 2025/26 season is currently 0. However, 2025/26 walrus harvest reports have not yet been provided to DFO from most communities throughout Nunavut.
- The total reported landings of walrus by sport hunters in 2025/26 was 22.
- For the 2026/27 season, 112 walrus sport hunts were requested (Coral Harbour 83, Igloolik 8, Iqaluit 3, Rankin Inlet 3, and Sanirajak 15).
- The Nunavut Walrus Working Group in-person in Iqaluit on February 9 and 10, 2026. This was the first meeting in a few years with DFO Science in attendance and the working group discussed the recent work. The working group also conducted the annual performance review as described in the Walrus Integrated Fisheries Management Plan.
- The Abundance and Potential Biological Removal (PBR) Estimates for Canada's High Arctic Atlantic Walrus Management Stocks, Summer 2022 CSAS Science Advisory Report was published in October 2025.

4. Bowhead

4a. 2026 Bowhead Hunts:

- The Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) of Eastern Canada-West Greenland (ECWG) bowhead whales in Nunavut waters is 5 per year. This TAH is shared regionally: 2 per year in each of the Qikiqtaaluk and Kivalliq Regions, and 1 per year in the Kitikmeot Region.
- In each Region, a Bowhead Hunt Plan for each hunt is submitted to the Regional Wildlife Organization (RWO) for review and decision. RWOs then transmit their decision(s) to DFO and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI). When NTI has completed the penthrite grenade training, DFO issues a Marine Mammal Fishing Licence to the Hunt Captain of each RWO-approved hunt,
- The Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) and the Kitikmeot Regional Wildlife Board (KRWB) anticipate receipt of Bowhead Hunt Plans for review and decision in the coming weeks. It is not known at this time whether the Kivalliq Wildlife Board will receive Bowhead Hunt Plans for review and decision.
- DFO is ready to assist with collection of harvest information and biological samples for scientific analysis.

4b. Bowhead Co-Management:

- DFO's Sustainable Fisheries Framework requires the development of Limit Reference Points (LRP) for key regional fisheries. Previously, the development of LRPs for the ECWG bowhead fishery were difficult, because aerial surveys cannot include their vast geographic range.
- In response to a DFO Fisheries Management request for Science Advice, a DFO CSAS process was conducted. Invited participants included Inuit co-management representatives from Nunavut (NWMB and NTI) and Nunavik (Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board and Makivvik Corporation)
- A CSAS Science Response document is now publicly available and can be downloaded from the CSAS website: [Science Response 2025/032](#).

Arctic Char:

1. Cambridge Bay:

- A pre-season fishery meeting was held in August 2025 at the Kitikmeot Foods Ltd. fish plant, where DFO Fisheries Management staff met with fishers to provide a refresher on the importance of logbooks to record catch-per-unit effort, bycatch, and discard information.
- The Arctic char commercial harvest took place at five sites in throughout the summer of 2025, yielding a total of 48,442 kg (round weight). The table below provides a detailed breakdown.

Location	Harvest
Surrey River	6,479 kg
Halokvik (30-Mile) River	5,000 kg
Ekalluk River	15,082 kg
Jayko River	16,880 kg
Lauchlan River	5,001 kg
Total Harvest (Round Weight in Kilogram)	48,442 kg

- DFO anticipates hosting a Cambridge Bay Arctic Char Integrated Fisheries Management Plan Working Group meeting during the current fiscal year. Recent results from genetic and telemetry studies indicate that the Cambridge Bay Arctic char commercial fishery is a mixed-stock fishery. These findings will guide discussions on the most appropriate management approach during the upcoming meeting.

2. Pangnirtung:

- The 2025/26 summer fishery in Cumberland Sound resulted in a total of approximately 15,048kg round weight of char reported landed at the Pangnirtung fish plant, and 132kg round weight of the winter fishery so far. Planning and preparations are underway for year-two of the Communal Fish Plan (CFP) Pilot Project.

3. Kivalliq:

- The 2025/26 summer commercial Arctic char harvest in the Kivalliq region was approximately 16,719 kg (round weight) reported landed at Kivalliq Arctic Foods in Rankin Inlet.
- In 2025, the third year of an acoustic telemetry study continued in Rankin Inlet with ongoing support and study design input from the Kangiqliniq HTO and Kivalliq Wildlife Board (KWB).
- 55 Arctic char and 31 Greenland cod in the Rankin Inlet area were tagged with small acoustic transmitters to track species movements. To date, 120 Arctic char and 49 Greenland cod have been tagged.
- With the assistance of two local technicians, various instruments were deployed in the marine environment around Rankin Inlet, including 33 acoustic receivers to record the movement of tagged fish, 1 hydrophone to record ship traffic, and 7 temperature and light recorders.
 - The acoustic receivers deployed in 2024 were recovered. Information on fish movement will be shared with the community when it is available.
- The Microplastics and Contaminants study continued in 2025 with 32 sea-run Arctic char captured from the Diana River. The study is examining if Arctic fish species are consuming microplastics and where these contaminants are being stored in their body.
 - DFO also collected 1 Lake trout, 31 Greenland cod, 31 sculpin, 29 capelin, and zooplankton from the Rankin Inlet area to assess levels of marine microplastics. Results from this work will be shared with the community when they are available.
- DFO received support from the KWB and the Kangiqliniq HTO to continue its marine fishes tagging/tracking, microplastics/contaminants, and Arctic char diet and muscle colour studies in 2026.
 - DFO also received support from the Kangiqliniq HTO to conduct a population assessment of the Diana River Arctic char population starting in 2026 pending funding. The community recently raised concerns about the population health due to anthropogenic and climate influences.

Greenland halibut (Turbot):

1. Cumberland Sound Turbot Management Area (CSTMA)

- DFO received a request from the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Association (PHTA), to carry forward unused 2025 turbot quota into 2026, which was approved and communicated to the PHTA on April 10, 2026. As per DFO's *Quota Carry-Forward Guidelines for Atlantic Canada*, harvesters are eligible to carry forward up to 75 t (or 15% of 2025's Total Allowable Harvest (TAH)) to the 2026 season, resulting in a 575 t TAH of turbot in the Cumberland Sound Turbot Management Area (CSTMA).
- More than 80 fish harvesters registered under the HTA's licence to participate in the CSTMA fishery. As of April 27, 2026, 555 t of turbot (round weight) has been landed, and the fishery is ongoing.

- DFO Science is using a Baited Remote Underwater Video system to estimate the number of Greenland Sharks in Cumberland Sound and assess the impact of fishery bycatch mortality on the Greenland Shark population. The project started in 2023 and is scheduled to continue through 2026.

2. Division 0A inshore

- The Minister has allocated 100 t of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Greenland halibut in NAFO Division 0A to inshore fisheries development for the 2026 and 2027 fishing seasons.
- Fisheries Management has issued licences for the community of Pond Inlet and Clyde River for quotas of 2 t and 15 t, respectively for the 2026 winter fishing season. Fishing is ongoing.

Fish Stocks Provisions:

- On November 9, 2022, DFO shared a proposal with stakeholders for a regulatory amendment to the *Fishery (General) Regulations* to identify the second batch of Major Fish Stocks that would be subject to the Fish Stocks provisions (sections 6.1-6.3) of the *Fisheries Act*. This included Arctic char stocks in Cambridge Bay and Cumberland Sound and Northern and Striped shrimp in the Eastern Assessment Zone (EAZ).
- The Fish Stocks provisions include obligations to maintain Major Fish Stocks identified in regulation at levels necessary to promote their sustainability and to develop and implement rebuilding plans for stocks that have declined to or below their Limit Reference Point.
- DFO staff presented this proposal to the Cambridge Bay Arctic char IFMP Working Group in June 2023 and the Pangnirtung HTO Board in July 2023, with general support for identifying Cumberland Sound and Cambridge Bay char stocks as Major Fish Stocks.
 - If these stocks are prescribed to the Fish Stocks provisions, there would be no immediate management changes as the stocks are considered healthy and the current management of the fishery is sustainable.
- On June 26, 2024, DFO requested an NWMB decision on whether the Board has the authority to approve plans to designate stocks as Major Fish Stocks under the Fish Stocks provisions.
- On July 22, 2024, the NWMB provided a response to this request for decision indicating that the Board considers the process of designating a stock as a Major Fish Stock an internal DFO management process and requested that DFO keep the NWMB informed when adding fish stocks located in the Nunavut Settlement Area or Nunavut-adjacent waters as Major Fish Stocks.
- In January 2025 information regarding Northern shrimp in the EAZ suggested that this stock is part of a larger stock complex, and thus the current stock area description and associated Limit Reference Point is no longer applicable. Given this information, consultation with stakeholders and rightsholders would need to occur before identifying this stock as major with the new proposed stock

structure. As a result, Northern and Striped shrimp in the EAZ has been removed from the second batch of Major Fish Stocks.

- The proposal to identify these stocks as Major Fish Stocks was pre-published in *Canada Gazette*, Part I, on October 12, 2024, for a 30-day public comment period that ended on November 11, 2024. No concerns were expressed regarding identifying these Arctic char stocks as major during this public comment period.
- The original proposed timeline to include these stocks in the regulation through publication of *Canada Gazette*, Part II, was spring 2025. There has been a delay in the process and publication of *Canada Gazette*, Part II, the timeline is undetermined at this time.
- An Arctic Region FSP Working Group has been formed as requested by Makivvik and the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board. The objective of the working group is to develop regional guidance for FSP for the Arctic Region and how it is applied in the co-management context. In February 2026 the working group held their first meeting. While the NWMB considers FSP processes to be an internal DFO process, DFO has continued to invite NWMB staff to attend these meetings and supply all relevant documents.

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