

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue:

Atlantic Walrus Integrated Fisheries Management Plan Update.

Background:

In 2007, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) initiated the development of an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for walrus, starting with the North Foxe Basin stock.

Current Situation:

DFO Science has accepted seven management units for Atlantic walrus, corresponding to geographic stocks described by Stewart (2008a). This approach has also been accepted by the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO). Development of an IFMP for Atlantic walrus in the eastern Arctic is ongoing. This will be an umbrella IFMP comprised of chapters specific to each stock, or in some cases, groupings of stocks. The seven Atlantic walrus stocks identified in Nunavut are:

1. West Jones Sound
2. Penny Strait-Lancaster Sound
3. Baffin Bay (shared with Greenland)
4. North Foxe Basin
5. Central Foxe Basin
6. Hudson Bay–Davis Strait (shared with Nunavik and Greenland)
7. Southern and Eastern Hudson Bay (shared with Nunavik)

The IFMP will ensure the sustainable harvest of walrus consistent with the principles of conservation set out in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Individual chapters of the walrus IFMP are being developed by co-management Working Groups (WGs). The WGs are comprised of representatives from the local Hunter & Trapper Organizations (HTOs), the Regional Wildlife Organization (RWO), Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) and DFO (Resource Management, Conservation & Protection, and Science). Others may be invited to attend meetings as requested or required (e.g. Elders, Industry representatives, or other government departments). NWMB technical staff is unable to attend WG meetings; however their input is requested on WG documents and decisions. The WGs are developing Terms of References (ToR) to guide the development of the IFMP chapters. Two WGs have been established to date.

The Foxe Basin Walrus Working Group (FBWWG) - mandate includes the North and Central Foxe Basin Walrus Stocks:

The FBWWG met in Igloolik in June 2009 and again in Iqaluit in February 2010. The HTOs that are represented on the FBWWG are Hall Beach and Igloolik. A Terms of Reference (ToR) has been finalized and the approval process will be initiated. A traditional ecological knowledge map is being produced that identifies important biological and ecologically significant areas for walrus in Foxe Basin. The FBWWG will meet again in Hall Beach in November 2010 to continue with the identification of management goals and measures for walrus in Foxe Basin. The resulting IFMP will be based on the best available knowledge, including scientific, local and Inuit and will follow the national DFO IFMP template. It is anticipated that a draft Foxe Basin chapter of the IFMP will be completed within 18 months.

Baffin Bay Walrus Working Group (BBWWG)- mandate includes the West Jones Sound, Penny Strait-Lancaster Sound, and Baffin Bay Walrus Stocks (high Arctic):

The BBWWG held its first meeting in Iqaluit on February 9-10, 2010. Co-chairs were elected, and a draft Terms of Reference tabled. The HTOs that are represented on the BBWWG are Resolute Bay, Grise Fiord, Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay (the Arctic Bay delegate did not attend the first meeting). The BBWWG agreed to develop a Management Plan for walrus in the high Arctic based on the best available knowledge, including scientific, local and Inuit, and will follow the national DFO IFMP template. The BBWWG has committed to meeting twice a year until a draft high Arctic chapter is in place. The next meeting for the BBWWG will take place in Resolute Bay, in November 2010 and will continue with the identification of management goals and measures. It is anticipated that a draft high Arctic chapter of the IFMP will be completed within 18 months.

DFO-Science, as a Working Group member, will collaborate with the HTOs to develop estimates of Atlantic walrus abundance and distribution. In 2008 DFO advised the NWMB that it was not possible to recommend sustainable harvest levels for walrus in Nunavut until more recent estimates of walrus population size and better harvest reporting were provided (Stewart 2008b). It is anticipated that information provided through the IFMP process will assist in filling these gaps.

Recommendations:

1. The NWMB consider the information provided in Stewart (2008a) that identifies management units of walrus in Nunavut based on stock differentiation as an appropriate and precautionary approach to co-management until supplementary information is collected that may allow for a further refinement of stock separation.

2. The NWMB support the development of an umbrella IFMP with stock-specific chapters for Atlantic walrus in Nunavut.

Consultations:

DFO Central & Arctic Region
DFO- Science- Winnipeg, MB.

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Date: March 10, 2010

Attachments:

Stewart, R.E.A. 2008a. Redefining Walrus Stocks in Canada. Arctic. 61(3):292-308. ARCTIC

Stewart, R.E.A. 2008b. Can We Calculate Total Allowable Harvests for Walrus Using Potential Biological Removal? DFO Can. Sci. Advis. Sec. Res. Doc. 2008/025.