

May 9th, 2011



Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Parnaivik Building
P.O. Box 1379
Iqaluit, NU
X0A 0H0

Re: Written submission to the NWMB concerning proposed modifications to the current Total Allowable Harvest for the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation

Dear colleagues,

The present letter is a submission by the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) regarding proposed changes to the harvest of polar bears from the Davis Strait (DS) subpopulation as they have been proposed to your organization by the Government of Nunavut (GN). As a co-management partner with a shared responsibility for the management of this subpopulation, the NMRWB wishes to present its views regarding changes to the Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) for DS polar bears.

As has been observed by Inuit in regions where bears from the Davis Strait subpopulation are harvested, and seconded by the latest scientific population assessments, the number of polar bears inhabiting the Davis Strait is higher than in the past. Based on the discussions held about DS polar bears during the user-to-user meeting held in Kuujuaq, QC last September the NMRWB supports a moderate increase in the TAH for this subpopulation.

While doubling of the TAH for Nunatsiavut communities (as proposed by the GN) should be given consideration by local governments, we feel that the issue is outside of the scope of an NWMB public hearing. Considering this, the NMRWB will not provide recommendations on this aspect of the GN proposal, except that the NWMB must keep in mind the possibility of an increased harvest in Nunatsiavut.

With regards to harvesting in Nunavik, the NMRWB has until now recognized the Guaranteed Harvest Levels established under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. At this time we have not planned to implement measures for the DS subpopulation that are specific to the Nunavik Marine Region, for which we are the management authority. Hence, as was discussed during the Davis Strait user-user workshop in September 2010, the current harvest regime will remain in place in Nunavik.

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Harvest by Nunavik communities has been documented by Quebec's Ministère des Ressources Naturelles et de la Faune (MRNF) in association with local Hunter Support organizations and Makivik Corporation. Seven Nunavik communities harvest from the DS subpopulation (Kangiqsujuaq to Kangiqsualujjuaq). Current removal estimates for Davis Strait are based on the fact that the 5-year mean annual harvest by Nunavimmiut is of between 11 and 15 polar bears. However, unpublished data compiled by the MRNF suggest that the 3-year mean annual harvest (current year excluded) is of just over 18 polar bears. This increase likely reflects the higher abundance of polar bears present in the region during that period. Since the polar bear population remains high in the area, it is unlikely that harvests will decline in the coming year unless environmental conditions make it impossible to hunt. That said, we caution that if the NWMB bases its decision solely on the harvest statistics reported by Peacock et al. (report included in your hearing register) they would be underestimating the actual level of harvesting by Nunavik Inuit in recent years, as evidenced by the 3-year mean reported by the MRNF.

Hence, while the NMRWB would be in support of an NMRWB decision to an increase the TAH for the Davis Strait polar bears in Nunavut, the current level of harvest by Nunavimmiut from this subpopulation must be taken into account when reaching a decision.

We hope that you will take our concerns into consideration as you arrive at a decision relative to the Government of Nunavut proposal and look forward to future collaborations between our organizations.

Sincerely,



Johnny Oovaut
Chairperson – Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board

