

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

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P.O. Box 1379, Iqaluit, NU, X0A 0H0
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Through this letter, the NWMB is extending an invitation to your department or organization to provide written submissions and supporting documentation in response to the GN-DoE Proposal, or otherwise regarding concerns with the total allowable harvest for the Western Hudson Bay polar subpopulation. All written materials must be filed with the NWMB – in English and Inuktitut – by no later than 5:00 p.m. (Iqaluit time) on **October 10th 2011**. Unless persuasive written and translated reasons are provided to the Board for late filing, the NWMB will not consider materials for this hearing that are not filed on time.

Materials may be filed with the Board in person, by courier or by mail. They should be clearly marked as pertaining to the NWMB Written Hearing for the 2011/2012 level of total allowable harvest for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation in the Nunavut Settlement Area. Delivery of the materials may also be made through fax or electronic transmission, but only if your department or organization confirms by phone with the NWMB – by no later than 5:00 p.m. (Iqaluit time) on **October 10th 2011**– that a complete and legible copy of the transmission has been received by the Board. Materials are deemed to have been filed on the actual day of receipt by the NWMB.

Shortly after the deadline for delivery of the written submissions, the NWMB will consider all of the relevant evidence and arguments filed, and will make a decision.

Please keep in mind that the more thorough, reliable and persuasive supporting evidence and justifications are, the more weight they will be given by the NWMB in the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* decision-making process.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to visit the NWMB website or to contact the Board directly.

Yours sincerely,



Mikidjuk Akavak
Chairperson of the
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Attachments (2)

- c.c. Gabriel Nirlungayuk, Director of Wildlife, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.;
Bert Dean, Senior Policy Advisor, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.;
David Akeagok, Deputy Minister, Nunavut Department of Environment;
Virginia Potter, Director General, Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service;
Siu-Ling Han, Head of Eastern Arctic, Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife
Service; and
Richard Connelly, Executive Director, Nunavut Inuit Wildlife Secretariat

**RULES FOR THE NWMB'S PUBLIC HEARING
TO CONSIDER PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE 2011 / 2012
LEVEL OF TOTAL ALLOWABLE HARVEST FOR THE WESTERN
HUDSON BAY POLAR BEAR SUBPOPULATION**

September 9th, 2011

THE PURPOSE of this NWMB written hearing is to publicly consider proposed modifications to the 2011/2012 level of total allowable harvest for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

The Government of Nunavut's Department of the Environment has filed – in Inuktitut and English - a *Proposal for NWMB Decision* (GN-DoE Proposal) with the NWMB, seeking a decision to consider modifications to the 2011/2012 Total Allowable Harvest for the Western Hudson Bay Polar Bear Subpopulation. The GN-DoE Proposal, along with other documents comprising the best available information to date, is available for review or download from the NWMB's website (www.nwmb.com), or by contacting the NWMB directly (Tel: 867-975-7300; E-mail: receptionist@nwmb.com).

RULES:

1. The NWMB shall provide notice to the public at least 30 days prior to the deadline for filing hearing submissions.
2. Any interested person or body may file with the NWMB a written submission in response to the GN-DoE Proposal, or otherwise regarding concerns with the proposed modifications to the 2011/2012 Total Allowable Harvest for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation – duly translated into Inuktitut or English as the case may be – by no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 10th, 2011.
3. Unless persuasive written and translated reasons are provided to the NWMB for late filing, the NWMB will not consider materials for this hearing that are not filed on time.
4. The requirement for translation of submissions filed with the NWMB does not apply to individual members of the public.
5. The NWMB shall ensure that all materials filed with it or produced by it are made publicly available, subject to relevant confidentiality or privacy concerns.
6. Any representative or agent of the Government of Canada or Government of Nunavut, any Hunters and Trappers Organization or Regional Wildlife Organization and any Inuk shall be accorded the status of party for the written hearing.
7. Any other person or body wishing to be named as a party by the NWMB shall make an appropriate request in writing to the NWMB.



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Minister of Environment
Minista Avatilirijutitut
Ministre de l'Environnement

Mikidjuk Akavak
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
PO Box 1379
IQALUIT NU X0A 0H0

AUG 18 2011

Re: Request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board on the Total Allowable Harvest for the Western Hudson Bay Polar Bear Population

Dear Mr. Akavak;

Attached please find a request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) for the management of the Western Hudson Bay Polar Bear Population (WH).

This request for a decision of the NWMB is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per Article 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA). Harvesting of WH normally begins in October, and therefore I respectfully request that the NWMB deal with this matter expediently and make a decision on this request by October 10, 2011.

In the attached request for decision, the Department recommends a Nunavut total harvest of 21 bears from WH for the 2011/12 harvest season, to be allocated by the Regional Wildlife organization amongst the Nunavut communities that harvest from WH. This recommendation takes into account the fact that Manitoba is expected to destroy about 4 bears as part of their problem bear management program.

If your staff has any question about this request or require additional information, they are asked to contact Drikus Gissing, Director, Wildlife Management Division.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk
Minister of Environment

attachment



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: 2011-2012 Polar Bear TAH Recommendations for the Western Hudson Bay (WH) population.

Background:

In 2005/2006 new polar bear Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) came into effect and Nunavut polar bear Total Allowable Harvest (TAH) allocations were increased for the WH polar bear population from 47 per year to 56 per year. This population extends into Manitoba therefore the increase considered the historical Manitoba control removal rate of about 8 bears per year in the Churchill area, and Inuit knowledge of increased densities north of Churchill which suggested that the WH population had increased. The WH Polar Bear MOUs (Section 5.7.1) states that when new research information becomes available the TAH will be corrected as necessary. New information on the WH population was received in February 2005 at the Federal/Provincial Polar Bear Technical Meeting (PBTC). The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) working in the Manitoba summer retreat area, estimated the WH polar bear population had declined from about 1200 to about 935 time referenced to 2004 over the last 20 years due to the combined effect of progressive sea-ice decline causing reductions to survival and recruitment rates, and subsequent unsustainability of control and harvest removals (Regehr et. al. 2007). However, current and historical information from Nunavut local hunters contradicts this scientific information (NTI 2007, GN Consultations 2004-2011). Inuit information suggests that the populations may not be declining as indicated by the scientific information. The Nunavut annual TAH for WH was reduced to 39 for 2008-2009, and set at 8 per year thereafter. However, keeping removals from WH to 8 per year has been problematic because of Nunavut removals for control actions after the regular harvest have exceeded the TAH (8) every year since the reduction, including 2010-2011.

Consultations:

Consultations for these recommendations have occurred as community and HTO meetings and as a population workshop with HTO and RWO representatives from Arviat, Whale Cove, Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, and the Kivalliq Regional Wildlife Organization. There have also been extensive consultations with NWMB, and at Provincial, National, and International levels. Unlike most other polar bear populations in Nunavut, the experience and knowledge of local hunters in WH is at odds with the scientific information on population status and TAH.

Current Status:

The reasons for the difference in perspective between Traditional Ecological Knowledge and scientific knowledge has been discussed but not resolved. Climate change may have altered polar bear distribution patterns and behavior giving Inuit hunters the impression that there are more bears because there are more bear-human encounters. However it may also be true that

both population numbers and population performance have been underestimated by scientific studies that failed to include the entire summer retreat area used by WH polar bears. Although the WH population has been studied longer than any other population, and a very high proportion of the population is marked, the entire population area has never been sampled in a single year. Additionally, the analysis time frame necessarily pools data taken from years where the area coverage has varied. To address this ambiguity, there have been two preliminary surveys of northern areas not searched (included) by the Regehr et. al. (2007) study (Peacock et. al. 2008, and an unpublished aerial survey conducted in summer 2010). Both surveys documented significant densities of polar bears in areas un-sampled by the Regehr et. al. (2007) study. CWS has continued mark-recapture sampling in the Manitoba "Churchill Study Area", and a comprehensive aerial survey (population number only) is planned for summer 2011. The TAH of the WH population is best considered uncertain at this time, but both the comprehensive aerial survey estimate and an update analysis of the M-R data available will be available for the next harvest season. Manitoba control removals have been reduced to ~4 per year (J. Dubois, personal communication).

Recommendation:

For the 2011-2012 harvest year only we recommend that the total sustainable removal for WH be 4.5% (Taylor et al. 1987) of the most recent population estimate (935: Regehr et. al. 2007) which equals **42 per year**. This assumes that the control removal rate by Manitoba will be 4 individuals per year. This leaves **38 for Nunavut WH TAH**. The 38 would be used to reconcile any apparent over-harvest of males and females in previous years (~19 bears), and accommodate the 2011-2012 defence kills and community hunting with the remainder (21 total for Nunavut TAH from WH). This TAH allocation would maintain the integrity of the Flexible Quota system across Nunavut and demonstrate appropriate consideration for current WH TEK. Long-term TAH for WH can be considered next year with the benefit of the new information and improved support from the WH communities. Respectfully, any demographic impacts from opting for historical harvest levels for a single season will be minor compared to the conservation benefits from accommodating the strongly held views of local hunters and scientific uncertainty ... regardless of the outcome of the new studies described above.