

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

MINUTES: CONFERENCE CALL No. 58

MONDAY, 25 JUNE 2001

Participants

Ben Kovic	Chairperson
Makabe Nartok	Member
Joan Scottie	Member
Kevin McCormick	Member
Jim Noble	Executive Director
Michelle Wheatley	Director, Wildlife Management
Michael d'Eca	Legal Advisor
Karen Ditz	Fisheries Management Biologist, DFO, Iqaluit

Not available

Gordon Koshinsky	Member
Meeka Mike	Member
Okalik Eegeesiak	Member
Moses Koonoo	Member
David Alagalak	Member

1. Opening by Chairperson

Although there was no quorum, Ben called the meeting to order advising the members that the agenda items were urgent and that other members would be contacted by phone to provide their advice and vote on the issues. Ben noted that the urgent items were agenda items three and four.

2. Agenda for Conference Call

Members accepted the agenda as presented.

3. Report on Closure of Qikiqtarjuaq Narwhal Fishery in October of 2000

Michael d'Eça offered to review the report as amended, noting that the report had not changed substantively from the previous review. Michael noted that the report was reviewed by DFO and a letter was received from the Area Director, Burt Hunt. Michael asked Karen Ditz if DFO has any concerns with the report.

Karen advised that while the report's review of the scientific data was accurate, it seemed to be overly critical of DFO views. Karen suggested that there should be full agreement among the partners prior to proceeding with the third year. She noted that the report is recommending that the Qikiqtaruaq hunt be opened again for the third year and DFO agrees with this decision.

Michael d'Eça directed the members to the conclusions and recommendations found on pages 8 and 9 of the report. The final recommendations included:

- The need for the NWMB, DFO and NTI to develop a communications policy and guidelines to respond to incidents with the community based management (cbm) system.
- Appropriate measures to deal with Qikiqtaruaq's high struck and lost rate.
- Specific plans to fill in the knowledge gaps of the resource through scientific research and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Kevin McCormick advised that he was comfortable with the report with correction of a few minor points. Kevin suggested that the NWMB might offer to provide a forum or workshop to discuss all these issues prior to next hunting season.

Karen Ditz noted that a lot of decisions will have to be made about the future of community-based management. Karen suggested that biologists will have to come up with population estimates and harvest estimates that are sustainable. Karen also noted that it will be difficult to come up with these figures in the near future, until research is completed, and therefore we will have to look at other methods for the interim period.

Ben Kovic agreed that it will take time to get the required stock information and that perhaps the easiest way would be to start with the IQ work first. Michael d'Eça noted that the third recommendation says that it is essential to do this IQ work, but notes that this should be done as soon as reasonably possible. "*What is reasonable*," needs to be worked out. Kevin recommended that the first item for discussion at a workshop might be the concept of holding to the original narwhal quotas as suggested by DFO.

Jim Noble noted concern for the current year. Communities were getting ready to hunt and have established limits for their hunts. If DFO does not support these new limits which are higher than original quotas, it will mean there is little time left to negotiate with the communities on a new system. Jim again noted that in all the correspondence leading up to this 3 year trial period, it was clearly stated that harvests would go over the quotas and Minister accepted that. It is puzzling that now DFO staff seem to be objecting to the higher harvests.

Michael d'Eça suggested that DFO is taking an even more conservative position based on the letter sent to the NWMB. DFO is suggesting limiting the harvest to recorded harvest, which were even less than the old quotas. DFO science has said Repulse Bay can increase their quota and still be sustainable. However, in Baffin region it seems to be different.

Karen Ditz agreed that these issues are the point where the parties are not agreeing. The references to the Board's letter of Sept 16, 1998, which the Minister did agree to, says; "*the elimination of quotas will allow communities to harvest what they need and may result in higher than sustainable harvest, but this is unlikely.*" Karen emphasized that now we know that it is not unlikely, DFO wants to come up with some way to deal with the concerns that have arisen. (e.g. allowing harvest levels at numbers higher than historically harvested.) Michael expressed concern with respect to the Repulse Bay increase of 400%. The NWMB did not formally accept that, but rather scientific advice was given to the community that it was sustainable. DFO needs to work with NWMB, RWOs and HTOs. Kevin also noted that the old quotas were not based on biology or what were considered sustainable limits and therefore we should use caution in using those quotas for reference on sustainability. Kevin reiterated that he felt the most effective way to deal with that issue was to get people together in workshop but that should be after the three year trial period. Michelle Wheatley noted that there was concern about the struck and lost rate during hunting of whales.

Michael d'Eça suggested that members look back at the conditions to which everyone agreed as the basis for cbm. Michael remarked that perhaps we tend to analyze letters more than we should but he believed it was clear in the Minister's response to the NWMB that he understood there might be harvesting increases and he accepts that in his letter: "*This information will be important if harvesting levels increase and new conservation measures must be put in place.*" Michael questioned whether we are in a situation where DFO will not support even the limitations that Qikiqtarjuaq is imposing on their hunters. Could DFO move in to close the fishery as a result? The community appears to have made significant movement, but DFO still seems to be concerned. The NWMB needs feedback from its partners in order to continue.

Karen Ditz noted that review had made reference to looking at harvest limits with NTI, DFO and NWMB. Karen recommended that we go further and ask the HTOs. If we (DFO, NWMB) set limits, then it is not cbm. Karen noted that this discussion needs to be held at the community level so they understand why we want certain harvest levels. The management bodies need to give the HTOs the tools to understand what the conservation concerns may be. The HTOs should be managing the resource based on all the information.

Kevin McCormick repeated his belief that we need a workshop with all the information as we know it and all the partners, so that we can make some collective decisions based on the information available. Kevin noted that it is possible to adjust rules as we learn more. All the parties don't have the full picture with respect to information. If DFO is taking a position that we need to revert back to the original limit – it will likely be rather difficult. We should look forward to discussing this in the fall, rather than doing this for this current hunting season.

Jim Noble noted that a tour of the communities was conducted and it was a decision at that time that we would proceed with cbm. Jim suggested that more work needs to be done on decreasing the struck and lost rate in the communities.

Michael d'Eça offered that he might be a little too critical of DFO. He agreed with Karen that we must involve the communities, but it seems that DFO has a rigid position with which it wants everybody to agree. In cbm, you may end up with a situation where the community comes to a different conclusion. In the 3 year trial, we have tried to let the HTOs run their own show for the trial period. If DFO is rigid, it is unrealistic to assume the communities will voluntarily agree to that. Many communities felt 3 years was too short, we need to look to making the harvest sustainable in the longer term.

Karen Ditz noted that DFO is still required to determine what constitutes a conservation concern and that decision would be best made out of agreement with the partners, and a decision needs to be made this current season. DFO needs some process to follow for this season's hunt.

Kevin McCormick suggested that as a board we share the same concern as DFO. The NWMB engaged in this process for a trial period. Perhaps things did not go as anticipated. Kevin suggested that we let the process run for the third year, then sit down and make adjustments to the process.

Ben Kovic noted that when original quota was set, it was estimated on annual take. When they made the original quota and assumption that this harvest amount was this, the narwhal were still increasing at 2 to 3 %. In 20 years, he presumed that the population has grown somewhat. He emphasized that as a result, he was not concerned by the current harvest levels.

Karen Ditz noted that Michelle Wheatley was present at the Narwhal and Beluga Scientific Working Group (SWG) meeting and was aware of the advice given. Scientists advised that based on the information that was gathered and at the current harvest levels, the population is not at risk of over-exploitation at the moment. However, any increased harvest would lead to a decrease in the confidence that the population is being harvested with a sustainable yield. DFO is therefore required to take a precautionary approach.

Kevin McCormick noted that one of the concerns that clouds the whole issue is whether we are seeing a short-term spike in harvesting levels, or a long-term increase. A 3-year time frame does not allow us to assess this. Harvest levels seem to be dependent on whether animals are available. The flexible quota system Michelle has previously suggested has merit. Kevin suggested that it may be useful to have someone from SWG to present up to date information on the narwhal population(s) to the Board.

Michael d'Eça suggested the Board, DFO and communities are faced with a situation. Realistically, what is going to happen for 2001. The communities have put forward changes to their bylaws. What realistically can be done for 2001? Does DFO have a bottom line?

Ben Kovic noted that the partners agreed at the beginning that this would be a three-year pilot project. He felt that in this, the third year, DFO is getting too restrictive. As a hunter when you get the opportunity to try something out, you get excited. Perhaps some get carried away. He believed most hunters would like to see this go ahead, but if it is going to be restrictive, then some hunters will play the hardball. We preach to them for all these years that we will support them, but at the beginning of the third year we seem to be reneging. Ben noted that he was speaking as a hunter. Once we succeed with narwhal, we can go to another species. We all understood harvest level would be higher. There must also have been growth in the narwhal population – we need to balance all the concerns and move on.

Michael d'Eça suggested two possibilities, for DFO to come to the conclusion that for the 2001 season, some increases over quotas will occur; or attempt a workshop and involve NTI, DFO, NWMB and two representatives from each of the communities. With the main issue being how to improve struck and lost rates.

It was understood that a further meeting with DFO, NWMB and NTI staff would be held to try and resolve the question of community-based management.

4. Funding Proposal for the Period 2003 – 2013

Michael d'Eça reviewed the “Funding Proposal and Workplan of the NWMB for the period from 10 July 2003 to 31 March 2013.” Michael noted that the NWMB received an invitation letter from the Chair to a meeting with the Working Group in July to discuss funding proposals. Michael suggested that in his view the current proposal is not quite ready for submission and needs a financial massage. Michael noted that the Board has to decide how to respond to the invitation. The Board should be fully ready to support their proposal before they go before this group (chief negotiators). Michael suggested that the NWMB has at least another year before they really get down to negotiating with each other. Dates will make a difference to us and how prepared we are. The easy part of this is to go through the proposal. Michael suggested that the Board propose a date of mid-August to present the proposal.

Kevin McCormick agreed that the process is still somewhat undefined. The DIAND chief negotiator indicated things will not likely pick up until the fall. This meeting is by and large a chance to scope out the issues on people's lists. Kevin agreed with Michael that we are better to hold our cards close to our chest until we are more prepared. Kevin suggested that perhaps it would be best to go in

and lay out the skeleton of a package and indicate we are developing a more comprehensive package for the fall.

Jim Noble noted that he had talked to Terry Fenge earlier in the day. Terry is on a working group assisting NIP. Terry was asking about the status of the NWMB submission as it was promised for June 18th. Terry also mentioned that the other IPGs had submitted their budget proposals. He suggested that it was very important to have the submission ready for the proposed July meeting of the negotiators in Iqaluit. Terry advised that currently DIAND is working with the same mandate that they had during the first negotiating session in 1993, if they have a larger budget this time around a submission will have to go the Treasury Board. Terry also provided the NWMB with a copy of a revised Implementation Plan drafted by NTI for presentation to the negotiation team and requested NWMB views on the paper.

Kevin McCormick asked what this draft was; Jim Noble advised that NTI decided to start drafting amendments to the Contract, rather than waiting for DIAND or other parties to draft.

Michael reviewed changes made to the draft submission with the members. The Board members present agreed that the proposal was acceptable, subject to some modifications to be completed by Michael and Gordon Tomlinson. The final report is expected to be completed by early August.

5. Director of Wildlife Management: Salary Review – Decision

Deferred to the September meeting.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 16:00.