

PROPOSAL REVIEW

Project Number: 3-14-02

Applicant: Steve Ferguson

Title: Cumberland Sound beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*) survey

Funding Requested: Single Year Funding - \$60,000 for 2014-2015

Rank: 4 / 18

Total Score 83.34 / 100
(no deductions)

Scoring Breakdown: NWMB Priority: 17.50 / 17.50
Regional Priority: 7.50 / 7.50
Quality: 30.50 / 35.00
Consultation: 12.00 / 15
Funding: 15.84 / 25

Project Summary:

This project uses aerial photography of Clearwater Fiord and visual surveys in northern and western Cumberland Sound to meet two main objectives: 1) to estimate the abundance of the Cumberland Sound beluga population; and 2) to use this updated estimate to look at trends in population size since 1990.

Project Contributions:

Requested from NWMB	\$ 60,000	20%
Other Contributions	<u>\$235,000</u>	<u>80%</u>
Total	\$295,000	100%

NWMB Staff Evaluation:

NWMB Priority: #1 - Contributes to the establishment, modification or removal of levels of Total Allowable Harvest (S 5.6.16 to S 5.6.18) for stocks or populations where there is believed to be a conservation concern or that are priority species for harvest by Inuit.

Regional Priority: #1 Baffin – Beluga: Management plan (Cumberland Sound)

Project design:

Aerial surveys will be conducted in early August of 2014. Five photographic surveys are planned for Clearwater Fiord, where the highest densities of belugas are expected, while two visual surveys will be conducted over northern and western Cumberland Sound. Visual surveys will employ four observers and will be recorded using a Global Positioning System. Observers will record all sightings of beluga, including number of individuals in a group, presence of calves, behavior, and direction of travel. Environmental conditions, including ice conditions, sea state, fog, and glare will also be noted. Photographic surveys will use two cameras (one on each side of the plane) with a laptop and Global Positioning System to take geo-referenced images on which belugas can be counted. To produce a final abundance estimate, surface counts of belugas produced by both visual and photographic surveys will be corrected for diving animals that were not visible to the observers or on the photographs. The results of this survey will be combined with the results from previous surveys (1990, 1999, and 2009) to identify any trends in population size.

Application of results:

Results of the survey will be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal as well as a Fisheries and Oceans Canada Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat Report, and will be applied to long-term monitoring of this beluga population. The results will provide an updated assessment and will contribute to an understanding of the trend in population size. The resulting assessment will form the basis of Science Advice regarding current population status, size and harvest levels.

Community involvement / consultation:

Following a presentation to the Pangirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization on the proposed project, staff from Fisheries and Oceans Canada requested a letter of support. In addition, a letter requesting support from the Hunters and Trappers Organization was emailed. The Project Leader will be traveling to Pangirtung to meet with the Hunters and Trappers Organization in person and discuss the project. The proposal includes plans to consult with the Hunters and Trappers Organization in March 2014 to identify any recent movements of belugas outside of the previously surveyed areas and to conduct in-community consultations upon completion of the study.

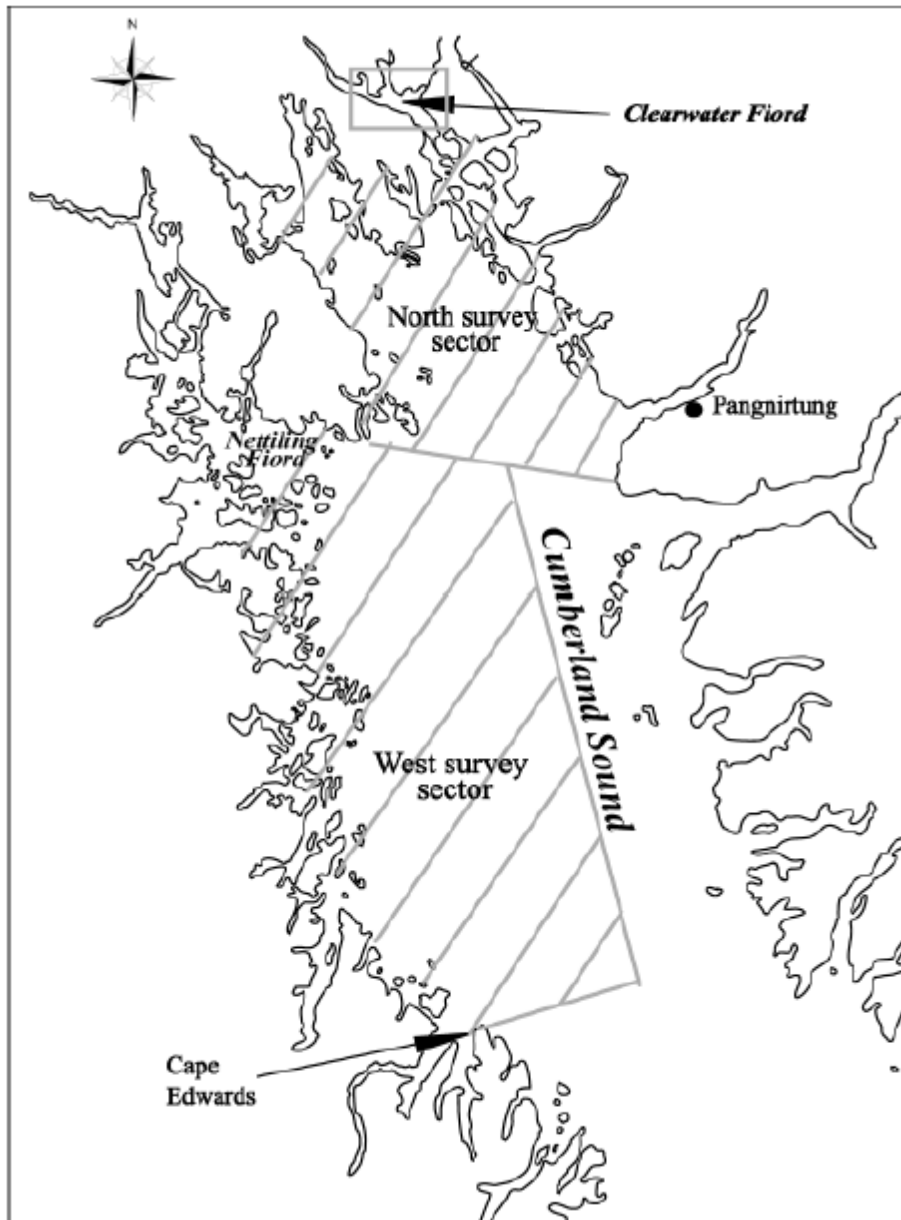
As per the NWRT policy, if the project is funded by the NWRT the project is required to: (1) provide a letter of support from all affected communities by June 30th, 2014; **OR** (2) provide a letter of support from a majority of the affected communities by June 30th, 2014 and provide evidence that the research has done a “conscientious” job of consulting; **OR** (3) provide the required information to demonstrate that “conscientious” consultation has been conducted by June 30th, 2014.

Recommendations: If this project is funded, the following conditions should apply:

1. Funding should be conditional on other funding, as identified in the proposal, being approved. This should be confirmed in writing; and
2. Funding should be conditional on meeting the consultation requirements identified as per the NWRT policy.

Prepared By: Danica Crystal, Wildlife Management Biologist, NWMB

Consultations: Peter Kydd, Wildlife Management Biologist, NWMB



Photographic surveys will be conducted in Clearwater Fiord and visual surveys will be conducted in the North and West survey sectors (shown above). The study area may be revised in consultation with the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization in March 2014.