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Nunavunmi Anngutighatigut Aulapkaijitkut Katimajiat
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

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Tammaqtailinahuarniriit anngutighat atuqhugit Inuit qaujimajatuqangillu ilihimaniillu ilitquhiannin
Conserving wildlife through the application of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific knowledge

March 26, 2020

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Government of Canada

Dear Minister Jordan:

Re: Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Request for Approval of the *Action Plan for the Blue Whale (Balaenoptera musculus), Northwest Atlantic Population, in Canada* Pursuant to the *Species at Risk Act*

NWMB Decision

On March 11, 2020, at the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB or Board) Regular Meeting (RM 001-2020), Fisheries and Oceans Canada asked the NWMB to approve the *Action Plan for the Blue Whale (Balaenoptera musculus), Northwest Atlantic Population, in Canada* (Action Plan), pursuant to the *Species at Risk Act*. The recovery measures proposed in the action plan include: (1) increasing knowledge of the population and its size, (2) mitigating threats that could hinder recovery of the blue whale in its Canadian range, and (3) developing a better understanding of the main threats to the population to identify their impact and develop effective measures to mitigate these threats.

At the NWMB's In-Camera Meeting (IC 001-2020) on March 12, 2020, the Board considered the proposal and passed the following motion:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to Section 5.2.34(d)(i) of the Nunavut Agreement, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board approve the Action Plan for the Blue Whale (Balaenoptera musculus), Northwest Atlantic Population, in Canada.

Reasons for the NWMB's Decision

In reaching its decision, the Board considered the attempts made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada to engage with Nunavut communities adjacent to the known occurrences of blue whales based on the Board's September 2019 recommendation. The rationale of additional consultations with Nunavut communities was to give Fisheries and Oceans Canada the opportunity to gather local knowledge and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit regarding

whether the range of the blue whale has expanded into Nunavut's waters. In October 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada engaged with the communities of Kimmirut, Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, Qikiqtarjuaq, Clyde River, and Pond Inlet to gather local knowledge and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit regarding the presence of blue whales near these communities. Hunters and Trappers Organizations in Clyde River and Pangnirtung responded to Fisheries and Oceans Canada that they do not see blue whales and they do not have any comments. In November 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada left phone messages to Hunters and Trappers Organizations in Iqaluit, Kimmirut, Pond Inlet, and Qikiqtarjuaq and did not receive any responses.

Given that the best available science suggests the blue whale is a "rare" visitor to Nunavut waters and there was no concern expressed by the communities that would be most directly affected, the Board decided to approve the Action Plan. The Board also considered that the Action Plan outlines projects or activities that do not occur within the Nunavut Settlement Area, but are required to meet the goals and objectives of the recovery strategy that are important for the recovery of the endangered Northwest Atlantic blue whale population.

Conclusion

The NWMB is hereby forwarding its decision to you, for your consideration pursuant to Section 5.3.17 of the *Nunavut Agreement.* Please contact the NWMB if you or your officials have any questions with respect to the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

c.c. Sam Stephenson, Species at Risk Biologist, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.