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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

November 05, 2021

Hon. Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
Government of Canada

Dear Steven Guilbeault:

Re: NWMB Decision on Environment and Climate Change Canada's Proposal to List Northern Bottlenose Whale as Special Concern under the Federal *Species at Risk Act*

NWMB Decision

At the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's (NWMB or Board) Regular Meeting (RM003-2021) on September 8, 2021, your department presented a proposal, requesting that the Board approve the listing of the Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea population of northern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*) as Special Concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

At the Board's In-Camera Meeting (IC003-2021), on September 9, 2021, the Board considered your department's submission and presentation to the Board, along with the *2011 COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report on the Northern Bottlenose Whale*, and oral submissions made by co-management partners at the Regular Meeting and made the following decision:

> *RESOLVED that, Pursuant to Section 5.2.34(f) of the Nunavut Agreement, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board approve the designation of Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea population of northern bottlenose whale as a species of Special Concern under the Federal Species at Risk Act.*

Reasons for NWMB Decision

In reaching its decision, the Board considered information from your department suggesting that the *Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea northern bottlenose whale population* was likely overhunted by commercial whalers in the 20th century and current population trends are unknown. The Board also considered the threats to this population identified and described in the *2011 COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report* including ongoing threats from commercial fisheries (e.g. entanglement from

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fishing gear), contaminants, and acoustic disturbance from human activities. The Board determined that the listing of the Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea population of northern bottlenose whale as Special Concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act* will have no impact on Inuit harvesting rights given that the species is not commonly encountered or harvested by Inuit, but could lead to improvement in its conservation status in other parts of its range where current threats persist.

The Board also considered and acknowledged your department's efforts to consult with relevant co-management partners in Nunavut, including the Hunters and Trappers Organizations in Clyde River, Iqaluit, Pangnirtung, and Qikiqtarjuaq, the Government of Nunavut-Department of Fisheries and Sealing, and Nunavut's commercial fishing enterprises.

Finally the Board noticed and would like to bring to your attention, that the proposed listing is based on an assessment conducted in 2011. Using such old data creates uncertainty regarding the extent to which these whales are currently affected by the identified threats. For effective wildlife management decisions, it is important that the Board be provided with the best available science and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit information.

Conclusion

The NWMB looks forward to your reply and prompt completion of the *Nunavut Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact the NWMB.

Sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

cc: Julie Spallin, Environment and Climate Change Canada.