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**Tammaqtailinahuarniriit annugutighat atuqhugut Inuit qaujimajatuqangillu ilihimaniillu ilituhiannin
Conserving wildlife through the application of Inuit Qaujijmajatuqangit and scientific knowledge**

February 17th 2014

The Honourable Gail Shea
House of Commons
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Parliament Buildings, Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Shea:

Re: The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's decisions on walrus sport hunt applications for 2014

Background and NWMB Decisions

On October 3rd 2013 the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB or Board) issued a call for walrus sport hunt applications for the 2014 season with a deadline for applications of November 4th 2013. The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board annually requests applications for walrus sport hunts for approval by the Board according to its *Interim Policy for Walrus Sport Hunts* (Interim Policy; attached) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada prior to the issuance of sport hunt licences.

The NWMB reviewed walrus sport hunt applications for the 2014 season at its December 2013 meeting in Iqaluit. There were a total of seven applications received from five communities. Five applications were to conduct walrus sport hunts within the Hudson Bay-Davis Strait stock¹ and two applications were to conduct sport hunts in the Foxe Basin Management Unit². The Board carefully considered each application, and in accordance with Sections 5.2.34(d)(i) and 5.6.48 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, the NWMB made the following decision:

RESOLVED that the NWMB approve the following walrus sport hunt applications: Luke Eetuk of E and E Outfitters in Coral Harbour (6 walrus), Dino Bruce of Tassiuq Outfitters in Coral Harbour (10 walrus), Aaron Emiktowt of Siku Tours in Coral Harbour (8 walrus) and Peter Kilabuk of Pangnirtung (2 walrus), subject to the following conditions:

1. *That all struck, lost and landed information is reported to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Iqaluit;*
2. *That the hunt be conducted in compliance with all safety and regulatory requirements established by Transport Canada or Fisheries and Oceans Canada;*
3. *That the assignment of each walrus to a sport hunter be made in writing;*

¹ Three applications received from Coral Harbour, one from Pangnirtung and one for Salluit, Quebec.

² One application received from Hall Beach and one application received from Igloolik.

4. That samples be collected and provided to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for inspection of any animal that is in suspicion of contamination or disease;
5. That Luke Eetuk, Dino Bruce and Aaron Emiktowt of Coral Harbour obtain written support from the Coral Harbour Hunters and Trappers Organization for the requested sport hunts; and
6. That Peter Kilabuk of Pangnirtung obtains written support from the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization for the requested sport hunts.

As per Sections 5.2.34(d)(i) and 5.6.48 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, as well as *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Sections 40.2.14 and 40.2.15 and *Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement* Section 27.6.2 pertaining to management in areas of equal use and occupancy, the Board also made the following decision:

RESOLVED that the NWMB approve the walrus sport hunt application from Adamie Keatainak of Salluit, Quebec (8 walrus), subject to the following conditions:

1. That all struck, lost and landed information is reported to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Iqaluit;
2. That the hunt be conducted in compliance with all safety and regulatory requirements established by Transport Canada or Fisheries and Oceans Canada;
3. That the assignment of each walrus to a sport hunter be made in writing;
4. That samples be collected and provided to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for inspection of any animal that is in suspicion of contamination or disease;
5. That Adamie Keatainak of Salluit, Quebec obtains written support from the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board for the requested sport hunts.

In addition, the Board also reviewed two applications from Hall Beach Hunters and Trappers Organization and Igloolik Hunters and Trappers Organization to conduct walrus sport hunts within the Foxe Basin Management Unit. In November 2013, Fisheries and Oceans Canada published estimates of abundance and total allowable removal levels for Atlantic walrus in five Canadian stocks in a new Science Advisory Report (CSAS SAR 2013/034), which included the Foxe Basin Management Unit. The new information was discussed at the November 2013 Foxe Basin Walrus Working Group meeting in Iqaluit, which included representatives from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Igloolik and Hall Beach Hunters and Trappers Organizations, and the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the NWMB. The NWMB considered the new information along with the walrus sport hunt applications at its December 2013 quarterly meeting and decided to arrange a conference call with NWMB staff and co-management partners before making a decision on the approval of these two applications. On January 14th 2014, NWMB staff held a conference call with co-management partners from Hall Beach and Igloolik Hunters and Trappers Organizations, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board. During the call Fisheries and Oceans Canada explained the science report and addressed questions from the participants. As well, co-management partners discussed the implications of the new abundance and total allowable removal estimates and potential interim measures for walrus sport hunting while an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan is being developed.

Following the conference call, the NWMB considered the additional input and in accordance with Sections 5.2.34(d)(i) and 5.6.48 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*, made the following decision during a Board teleconference on January 23rd 2014:

RESOLVED that the NWMB approve the following walrus sport hunt applications: Hall Beach Hunters and Trappers Organization (15 walrus) and Igloolik Hunters and Trappers Organization (25 walrus), subject to the following conditions:

- 1. That all struck, lost and landed information is reported to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Iqaluit;*
- 2. That the hunt be conducted in compliance with all safety and regulatory requirements established by Transport Canada or Fisheries and Oceans Canada;*
- 3. That the assignment of each walrus to a sport hunter be made in writing; and*
- 4. That samples be collected and provided to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for inspection of any animal that is in suspicion of contamination or disease.*

Reasons for the NWMB Decisions

Hudson Bay-Davis Strait Stock

The NWMB received five applications to conduct walrus sport hunts from the Hudson Bay-Davis Strait Atlantic walrus stock. Three of these applications, requesting a total of 24 sport hunt licences, were submitted from the community of Coral Harbour. Coral Harbour has a community quota of 60 walrus (*Marine Mammal Regulations*, Section 26). Over the past five years³, on average 6 walrus in subsistence hunts and 6 walrus in sport hunts have been harvested annually in Coral Harbour. The requested number of walrus sport hunts is within the community quota and should not interfere with subsistence harvests. As well, the three hunt plans submitted from Coral Harbour addressed the Interim Policy's conditions regarding humane harvesting and hunter and public safety. The Coral Harbour Hunters and Trappers Organization has also provided letters of support for all of the Coral Harbour applicants' hunts, which have been forwarded to Fisheries and Oceans staff in Iqaluit.

Harvesters from Pangnirtung and Salluit also harvest walrus from the Hudson Bay-Davis Strait stock. Unlike Coral Harbour, they do not have a community quota. A systematic population survey over the entire geographic area has not occurred for this stock. Over the past five years, on average 10 walrus from Pangnirtung, and 15 walrus from Salluit, have been harvested annually in subsistence hunts. Walrus sport hunts were not conducted in either community during this time period. For both communities, the requested number of walrus sport hunt licenses is less than the average annual harvests. The hunt plans submitted from the applicants in Pangnirtung and Salluit addressed the Interim Policy's humane harvesting and hunter safety conditions. Moreover, Mr. Kilabuk from Pangnirtung received a letter of support from the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization, which has been forwarded to Fisheries and Oceans staff in Iqaluit. The Board's approval of Mr. Keatainak's application is conditional on obtaining a letter of support from the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (Nunavik Board), where the Nunavik Board will have an opportunity to state any concerns. The Nunavik Board has informed NWMB staff that they will provide a letter.

North and Central Foxe Basin Management Unit

With the November 2013 Science Advisory Report (CSAS SAR 2013/034), the Board considered the new estimates of abundance and total allowable removals for Atlantic walrus for the Foxe Basin management unit. For the first time since the 1995 pilot walrus sport hunt, the

³ All five-year averages are based on available data for the 2007/2008-2011/2012 hunting seasons.

NWMB was faced with the extra challenge of considering what number of walrus sport hunts to approve based on new recommended harvest level information. However, the NWMB has not yet received a proposal for decision on the new harvest level recommendations. Likewise, the Board has not made any decisions according to Sections 5.6.16 and 5.6.17 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* that have gone through the land claims decision-making process on establishing total allowable harvests for walrus in the Nunavut Settlement Area. Therefore the current quantitative harvest limits are designated by the *Marine Mammal Regulations* which state that an Inuk may, without a licence, harvest four walrus per year⁴ (*Marine Mammal Regulations* Section 6). As per *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* Section 5.7.34(b), walrus sport hunt licenses are administered through the written assignment of an Inuk's right to harvest to the sport hunter with the understanding that the Inuk is also assigning his or her share of the total allowable harvest.

The NWMB reviewed two applications to conduct walrus sport hunts within the Foxe Basin management unit. Both hunt plans adequately addressed the Interim Policy's conditions regarding humane harvesting and hunter and public safety. Aerial surveys conducted in 2011 estimated a population size ranging between 8,153 and 13,452 walrus based on counts from different dates with different adjustment factors. Based on this population estimate, science advice suggests a total allowable removal level between 106 and 166 walrus. Over the past five years, on average 140 walrus in subsistence harvests and 2 walrus in sport hunts have been harvested annually from the Foxe Basin Management Unit. This annual harvest level is within the range of suggested total allowable removal levels for sustainable harvest.

During the teleconference call on January 14th 2013 representatives from Hall Beach and Igloolik Hunters and Trappers Organizations, as well as Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, expressed concern about a number of aspects of the new Science Advisory Report and community consultation. They included concerns with the survey coverage, level of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit incorporated into the survey design and population estimate, and accuracy of the current stock boundaries. Abundance estimates in the science report are likely underestimated due to incomplete survey coverage, disturbance by boat activity during the survey and inter-annual variability in walrus distribution, weather and ice conditions. As well, the abundance estimates were calculated based on correction factors developed from previous studies or from tagged walrus that may not be representative of the whole stock. Hunters and Trappers Organization representatives on the call also expressed concern about the level of community consultation that has taken place to date regarding the new abundance and total allowable removal level estimates and their implications for new harvest limits. Based on the sources of uncertainty reported in the Science Advisory Report and community input, as well the need for additional consultation before new harvesting limitations are established on harvesting walrus, the Board decided to approve the requested number of walrus sport hunts from both communities in the Foxe Basin management unit.

The NWMB is encouraged with Fisheries and Oceans' and the Walrus Working Groups' progress in developing an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic walrus in the Nunavut Settlement Area collaboratively with the various co-management partners. The NWMB also understands that Fisheries and Oceans is planning on conducting community consultations regarding the new Management Plan, as well as science advice on population estimates and

⁴ An exception applies to four Nunavut communities which have a community quota (Coral Harbour – 60 walrus; Sanikiluaq – 10 walrus; Arctic Bay – 10 walrus; Clyde River – 20 walrus).

total allowable removals in spring 2014. The feedback from these community consultations will be valuable in further developing the Management Plan. The consultation feedback will also be required when submitting any requests for decision to the Board on approval of the Management Plan and any associated new limits on the harvesting of walrus in Nunavut, as described in Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 6.4 of the NWMB Governance Manual. The development of the Management Plan and the accompanying consultations will also provide an opportunity for input on new approaches to approving walrus sport hunts in line with the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* that ensure the sustainable harvest of walrus, while also providing economic benefits in Nunavut communities.

Conclusion

Should you accept the decisions of the NWMB with regards to the 2014 walrus sport hunts, the NWMB anticipates that implementation of the decisions by your department will include appropriate notification of walrus sport hunt allocation approvals to the applicants. The NWMB will communicate this to the applicants and applicants will be informed that the decisions are currently under your consideration as per the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*. Should you have any questions or concerns with respect to any of these decisions, please do not hesitate to contact the NWMB.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Kovic', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ben Kovic
Chairperson of the
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Enclosures (1)

Minister of
Fisheries and Oceans



Ministre des
Pêches et des Océans

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E6

APR 16 2014

Mr. Ben Kovic
Chairperson
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board
P.O. Box 1379
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Kovic:

Thank you for your letter dated February 17, 2014 conveying the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's decisions regarding the walrus sport hunts for 2014. I appreciate the detailed rationale you have provided in your letter. This is very helpful to me in making my decision.

I recognize the economic importance of the walrus sport hunt for some communities and we are committed to working with Inuit to ensure walrus are harvested in a sustainable manner and to maintain related economic opportunities. However, in addition to socio-economic considerations, management decisions on sustainable harvest levels need to be based on the best available traditional knowledge and scientific information.

The Department recently published peer-reviewed science advice on walrus in the eastern Canadian Arctic, which included estimates of abundance and Total Allowable Removals for four of the six walrus stocks or management units. This information suggests that there may be concerns with the sustainability of current harvests for the Foxe Basin management unit. It is my understanding that the Board considered the Departmental science advice along with community input in making its decision on the 2014 walrus sport hunt allocations. The Board determined that as there has not been a proposal for decision for the establishment of new harvest levels, the existing quantitative harvest limits still apply, which allow for an Inuk to harvest up to four walrus per year, except where a community quota exists. As such, a decision was made by the Board to approve all 2014 walrus sport hunt applications.

.../2

Canada

While I have concerns with this decision for the Foxe Basin management unit, I am encouraged by the efforts of co-management organizations in developing an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for Atlantic walrus in the Nunavut Settlement Area. This management plan will identify the main objectives and requirements for the walrus fishery, as well as the management measures that will be used to achieve these objectives, including the establishment of sustainable harvest levels. I understand that community consultations on the recent science advice, the draft management plan and potential sustainable harvest level recommendations are being scheduled for the spring of 2014.

With these considerations, this letter confirms that I accept the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's decision for the 2014 season only to approve 25 sport hunts for the Igloodik Hunters and Trappers Organization, 15 sport hunts for the Hall Beach Hunters and Trappers Organization, 8 sport hunts for Aaron Emiktowt of Siku Tours in Coral Harbour, 6 sport hunts for Luke Eetuk of E and E Outfitters in Coral Harbour, 10 sport hunts for Dino Bruce of Tassiuq Outfitters in Coral Harbour, 2 sport hunts for Peter Kilabuk of Pangnirtung and 8 sport hunts for Adamie Keatainak of Salluit, Quebec for the 2014 season, subject to the conditions set out in the Board's letter of February 17, 2014.

Departmental officials in Iqaluit will notify the successful applicants. Once the Department's Iqaluit office has received all of the required information to complete a licence for the sport hunt, departmental officials will issue the licence.

Please be advised that the Department will be providing the Board with a proposal for decision to establish a Total Allowable Harvest level for the Foxe Basin management unit in the coming weeks. It is my expectation that the Total Allowable Harvest level and corresponding Basic Needs Level will be established in advance of the 2015 walrus sport hunt season to provide for the conservation of walrus in the Foxe Basin management unit.

I look forward to continued collaboration with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and its technical staff on walrus co-management issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gail Shea".

Gail Shea, P.C., M.P.