

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

ጥቅምት 20, 2017

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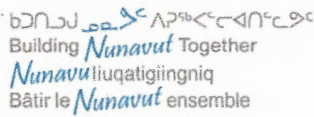
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David Shulman

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September 20th 2017

Honourable Joe Savikataaq
Minister of Environment
Government of Nunavut

Dear Minister Savikataaq:

Re: Nunavut Wildlife Management Board decisions concerning the level of regional total allowable harvest for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation

1. THE NWMB DECISIONS

On September 12th 2017, during its In-Camera meeting (IC003-2017) in Iqaluit, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB or Board) considered the Government of Nunavut-Department of Environment's *Proposal for NWMB Decision* (Proposal) concerning the total allowable harvest of the Western Hudson Bay (WH) polar bear subpopulation. At this meeting, the NWMB passed the following resolutions:

RESOLVED that the NWMB approve, pursuant to Section 5.6.16, 5.6.17(b), 5.3.3(a), and 5.3.3(c) of the *Nunavut Agreement* and as an interim measure due to urgent circumstances, an increase of six (6) bears to the regional total allowable harvest in the Nunavut Settlement Area for the Western Hudson Bay subpopulation, resulting in an overall regional total allowable harvest of 34 bears for the 2017-2018 harvest season.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the NWMB hold an in-person public hearing at the earliest possible opportunity concerning the future (2018-2019 and subsequent harvest seasons) level of the regional total allowable harvest in the Nunavut Settlement Area for the Western Hudson Bay subpopulation.

2. RATIONALE FOR THE NWMB's DECISIONS

In arriving at this decision, the NWMB carefully considered the new information (2016 *Aerial Survey of the Western Hudson Bay Polar Bear Subpopulation, Final Report*) and recommendations from the Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment. The aerial survey estimated the abundance of the WH subpopulation to be 842 (95% CI: 562-1121) bears. The previous 2011 aerial survey estimate was 1030 (95% CI: 754-1406).

and was based on similar methods. Although this 2016 abundance estimate indicates an 18% decline in abundance, the estimates from the two studies are not statistically different, which suggests that the subpopulation abundance may be stable. However, the Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment expressed the following concerns about the health of the WH polar bear subpopulation: 1) reproductive performance (the number of cubs and yearlings compared to adults) was lower than adjacent subpopulations of Southern Hudson Bay and Foxe Basin, and, 2) other studies have found that the reproductive performance and body condition of WH polar bears has declined.

The Board also considered information provided by the public during the Regular Meeting (RM003-2017) on September 11th 2017 and heard about polar bear-human conflicts in the communities on the western Hudson Bay coast. The main message was that the number of polar bears coming to the communities and garbage dumps has increased, causing serious concerns about public safety and property damage, especially during the late autumn when bears are on land waiting for the sea ice to form.

More specifically, the NWMB's decision:

1. Uses a precautionary approach, by setting the regional WH total allowable harvest (34) in the Nunavut Settlement Area using the Government of Nunavut recommended sustainable harvest rate of 4.5% (4.5% of 842 = 38) for a subpopulation considered to be stable.
2. Considers the removal rate for the entire WH subpopulation by considering the average number (4 bears/yr) of polar bear defence kills in the Manitoba.
3. By setting a new TAH, the polar bear credits for the communities that harvest from WH subpopulation (Arviat, Baker Lake, Chesterfield Inlet, Rankin Inlet and Whale Cove)¹ will be reset to zero as per the flexible quota system of the 2005 *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Management of Western Hudson Polar Bears Population* and each community can be allocated their full quota for the 2017-2018 harvest season.
4. Incorporates Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) knowledge that there are greater numbers of bears in and near the communities, and that subpopulation size is stable or increasing.
5. Considers the western Hudson Bay communities' public safety concerns and the anticipated defence of life and property kills.

¹The Government of Nunavut – Department of Environment confirmed that as per the flexible-quota system the available tags for the 2017/2018 harvest season are thirteen (13), reduced from overall regional TAH of twenty-eight (28). The reduction in tags is a direct result of defense kills over the past several years.

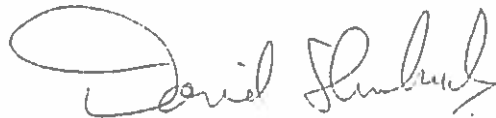
6. The in-person public hearing will provide an opportunity for all affected communities, co-management partners, and the public to present oral and written submissions on the future (2018-19) WH polar bear total allowable harvest.

To reduce ongoing human-polar bear conflicts in the Hudson Bay communities, keep communities safe, and provide information for future TAH decisions, the NWMB encourages the Government of Nunavut to work with the communities to minimize polar bear defense kills, and develop and implement an annual WH polar bear monitoring program (scientific and/or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit) to provide indicators of abundance, distribution, reproduction, and health.

As the 2017-2018 harvest season is underway, the NWMB looks forward to your prompt reply and timely completion of the *Nunavut Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process.

Should you or your officials have any questions or concerns about the content of this letter, please contact the NWMB.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Daniel Shewchuk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "S".

Daniel Shewchuk
Acting Chairperson of the
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

