

# SUBMISSION TO THE

# NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD



## FOR

**Information:**

**Decision: X**

**Issue:** Request for Decision on Davis Strait Polar Bear Subpopulation Total Allowable Harvest

## **Background:**

The Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation straddles Quebec, Nunavut, and Newfoundland-Labrador (refer to Appendix 1). Together, the three Provincial and Territorial governments share the responsibility for the management of this subpopulation. There is a concern from some jurisdictions, however that the subpopulation is disproportionately allocated, Quebec (*Guaranteed Harvest Level of 62 for all populations; 5-year mean harvest of 11*), Nunavut (46) and Nunatsiavut (6) across the three jurisdictions<sup>1</sup>.

Environment Canada was asked by the jurisdictions to assist in the establishment of a process that would provide recommendations to address this issue. Representatives of all concerned jurisdictions and organizations met in Montreal on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2010, to initiate this process. It was decided that in order to determine the appropriate allocation of harvest, it was necessary to provide advice on the establishment of a population management objective based on conservation principles, and to appropriately allocate the harvest between the three jurisdictions. It was determined that this advice should be based on the best available western science and traditional ecological knowledge, and should also include input from users that harvest polar bear from the Davis Strait subpopulation. As such, it was felt that user advice would most appropriately be sought via a user-to-user workshop. Upon receiving advice from all jurisdictions, the Montréal Group would then review the information and provide recommendations to the various authorities for their consideration.

A two-and-a half day user-to-user workshop was held in Kuujuaq, Quebec on September 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, 2010. At this meeting, Inuit representatives from Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and Nunavut presented traditional ecological knowledge and participants heard presentations from jurisdiction representatives on their respective polar bear management processes. The most recent western science population analysis was also presented. Inuit representatives from Nunatsiavut, Nunavik and Nunavut decided on two resolutions (refer to attached) at the user-to-user meeting for consideration. It was identified that the current population should be reduced to reduce human-bear conflict, which would allow for an increase in harvest.

In brief summary the main outcomes of the workshop was the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Greenland also is believed to harvest 2 from the Davis Strait population; however Greenland did not participate in the interjurisdictional meetings.

- The Nunatsiavut Government requested that their TAH be increased from 6 to 12 bears, which was supported by all parties at the workshop at the time<sup>2</sup>;
- The users from Nunavut passed a motion to eliminate the TAH or increase the TAH by 100 which would be allocated to the 3 Nunavut communities

The most recent population inventory (2005-2007) estimates the population to be 2,158 (95% CI 1978-2338), which is a significant increase from the inventory conducted between 1974-1979 which estimated the population to be approximately 900 and the 1995 estimate of 1,400 based on population modeling. However, the scientific information suggests that the subpopulation will decline in the future due to being at carry capacity, and the bears showing relatively poor reproduction performance. Inuit representatives provided information on increased numbers being encountered near communities and on the land.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB or Board) received a request for decision on the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation total allowable harvest (TAH) from the Government of Nunavut's (GN) Minister of Environment (refer to Appendix 3). The request is being made as a Ministerial Management Initiative<sup>3</sup> as per S 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) and the Minister has requested that the Board make a decision by June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 so that any modifications can be implemented for the next harvest season starting July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.

In addition the NWMB has received requests for TAH increases from the Amarok HTO (October 15<sup>th</sup> 2010), Pangnirtung HTO (November 13<sup>th</sup> 2008) and Mayukalik HTO (October 12<sup>th</sup> 2010). As per direction provided by the Board at Regular Meeting No.66 to staff, the NWMB responded to the requests by indicating that the NWMB would reconsider the TAH once recommendations are provided to the NWMB by GN.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> 2011, the NWMB received the finalized package of information for management authorities of the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation from the Interjurisdictional Davis Strait Committee. The package included a letter summarizing the information and providing recommendations, minutes from the meeting in Kuujuaq, PowerPoint presentation on the 2005-2007 population inventory and the user resolutions. The user resolutions are attached in Appendix 2.

### **Recommendation:**

As per S 5.3.4 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA), the NWMB and the Minister are required to take into account the harvesting activities outside the Nunavut Settlement Area and the terms of any domestic interjurisdictional agreements or international agreements. NWMB staff are providing the following options to proceed with a reconsideration of the TAH for the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation:

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<sup>2</sup>The Newfoundland Government has since indicated that they do not support an increase in harvesting levels in Davis Strait, rather they believe that the existing TAH be reallocated amongst jurisdictions such that a portion of Nunavut's TAH is reallocated to Newfoundland;

<sup>3</sup> S 5.3.25 "Nothing in this Article will prevent a Minister, on the Minister's own initiative, from referring a management matter to the NWMB. Where a matter is referred, the NWMB shall deal expeditiously with it. The NWMB will respond to Ministerial initiatives with decisions in time to permit Ministers to meet their national and international obligations."

OPTION 1:

1. Hold a public hearing May 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> in Iqaluit<sup>4</sup> and a decision making session during the Board's June Regular Meeting 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>.

OPTION 2:

2. Hold a public hearing during the Board's June Regular Meeting 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>.

Other recommendations:

That the Board pay to cover the costs of two representatives from each of the three communities that harvest from the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation.

**Consultations:** Robert Kidd, Director of Wildlife Management, NWMB;

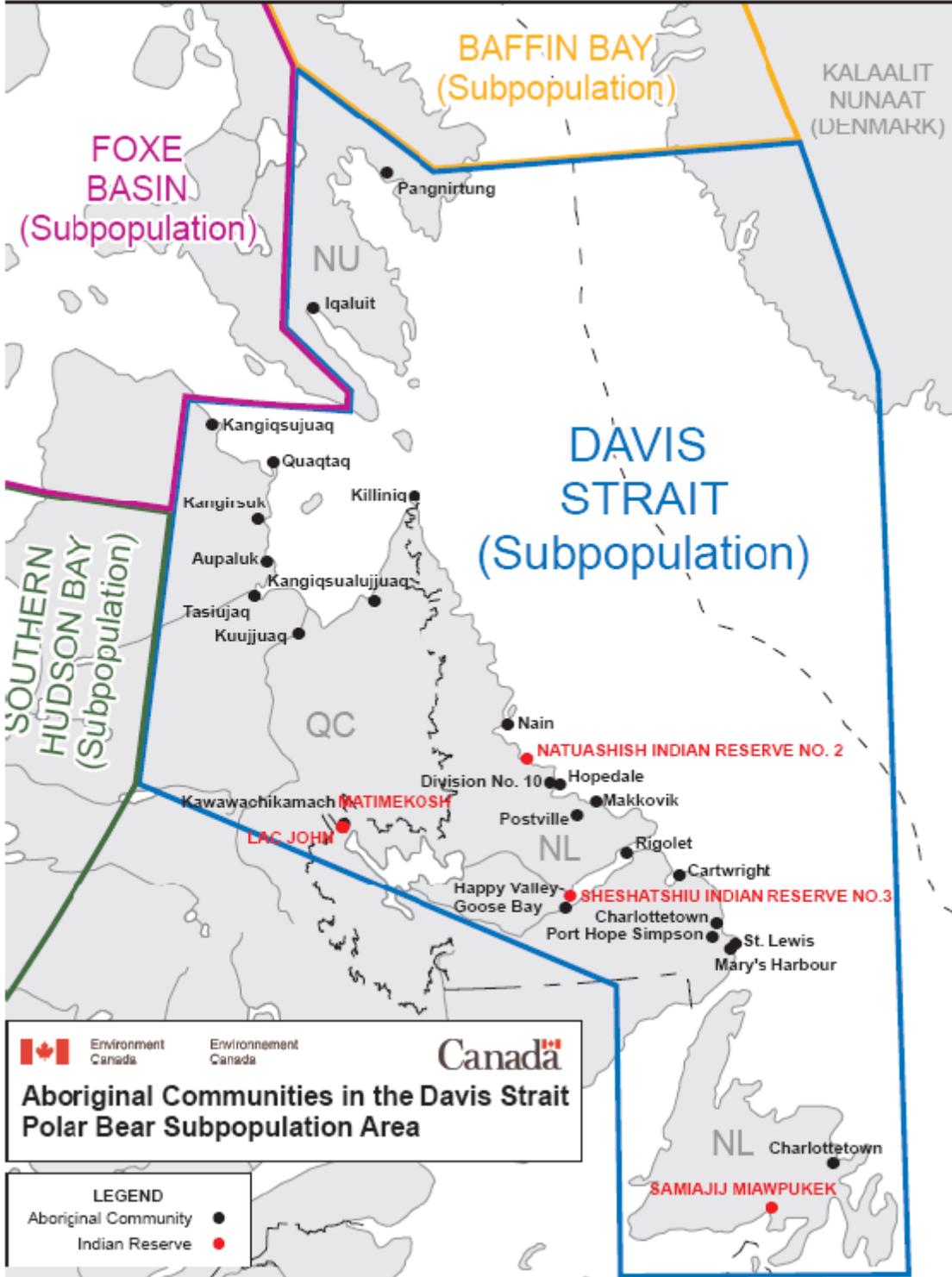
**Prepared By:** Adam Schneidmiller, Wildlife Management Biologist, NWMB

**Date:** March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011

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<sup>4</sup> If notice of the public hearing is provided on March 30<sup>th</sup> and the deadline for submissions is May 2<sup>nd</sup> this would allow 32 days for interested parties to respond.

Appendix 1: Aboriginal Communities in the Davis Strait Polar Bear Subpopulation Area



Appendix 2: User to User Meeting Resolutions

**1<sup>st</sup> Interjurisdictional Davis Strait Polar bear User to User Meeting between User Groups of Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut.**

Kuujuak, Québec

September 13th – 16th, 2010.

**WHEREAS** the current quota for Nunatsiavut is based on an estimate of approximately 900 animals in 1979,

**WHEREAS** Inuit knowledge has indicated a substantial increase in the Davis Strait polar bear subpopulation for some time,

**WHEREAS** the most recent scientific survey provides an estimate of 2,142 animals in 2007,

**WHEREAS** the polar bear density for the Davis Strait subpopulation (5.6 per 1000 square kilometers) is one of the highest known for any polar bear subpopulation,

**WHEREAS** nesting areas of birds are being depleted by polar bears,

**WHEREAS** other wildlife such as seals are being depleted by polar bears,

**WHEREAS** cabins and other personal items are being damaged by polar bears,

**WHEREAS** there are human safety concerns because of increased polar bear encounters,

**THEREFORE be it resolved that**

“Representatives of the Inuit user groups of Nunavik and Nunavut support the request by Nunatsiavut to increase their quota by 6”.

Moved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Seconded by: \_\_\_\_\_

In favor: \_\_\_\_\_ Against: \_\_\_\_\_ Abstained: \_\_\_\_\_

Passed: \_\_\_\_\_ Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution # 1

Date: September 15, 2010

## **1<sup>st</sup> Interjurisdictional Davis Strait Polar bear User to User Meeting between User Groups of Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut.**

Kuujuak, Québec

September 13th – 16th, 2010.

**WHEREAS** current population estimates for the Davis strait polar bear subpopulation indicate a significant increase from 900 in 1979 to 2142 in 2007,

**WHEREAS** user representatives from Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Nunavut attending a meeting in Kuujuak discussed their respective concerns related to polar bears harvested in the Davis Strait subpopulation

**WHEREAS** user representatives identified significant concern including but not limited to damage related to property cabins, tents, threat of injury, and death to humans related to this increase in bear numbers and the greater presence in proximity to communities and camps,

**WHEREAS** the increased number of bears has equally been seen to be negatively impacting on other animal resources important to Inuit for subsistence consumption including but not limited to predation of assorted waterfowl, their eggs, in addition to various seal species; walrus are anticipated to be impacted in the near future

**WHEREAS** specific concern was voiced by delegates in respect to Inuit not having been involved in the delineation of respective polar bear subpopulation zones,

**WHEREAS** in light of current population estimate for Davis Strait, and notwithstanding possible impacts from climate change, user representatives attending the meeting believe there is currently no valid biological conservation threat.

**WHEREAS** in consequence, Nunavut representatives wish to eliminate the current quota system in Nunavut for a 5 year experimental period; failing this, Nunavut delegates wish to increase their quota by 100 bears taken from Davis Strait to be allocated to the 3 Nunavut communities harvesting Davis strait subpopulation

### **THEREFORE be it resolved:**

That adequate monetary compensation be solicited from government to pay for any damages incurred to property, injury, or loss of human life.

That immediate steps are taken to obtain Inuit input in delineation of polar bear subpopulation zones not limited to Davis Strait

That respective governments and relevant land claims organizations are immediately informed of the decisions contained herein

That user representatives deemed this meeting as particularly valuable in bringing users from the different jurisdictions together for the first time to discuss conservation and management of this shared resource and moreover advocate for meetings to be scheduled on a regular basis.

Moved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Seconded by: \_\_\_\_\_

In favor: \_\_\_\_\_ Against: \_\_\_\_\_ Abstained: \_\_\_\_\_

Passed: \_\_\_\_\_ Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution # 2

Date: September 15, 2010

Appendix 3: Government of Nunavut Request for Decision on the TAH for the Davis Strait Polar Bear Subpopulation