

SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD



FOR

Information: X

Decision: _____

Issue: Update on Inter-jurisdictional Southern Hudson Bay Polar Bear Subpopulation Process

Background:

On June 22nd 2011, a number of key organizations¹ met in Quebec City to review the Southern Hudson Bay (SHB) polar bear population status and harvest management. In brief, the following were the key conclusions of the meeting:

- Unanimous commitment to a sustainable harvest;
- Over the short term,
 - Seek from users, prior to the next hunting season, a voluntary agreement to keep harvest in line with historic levels at a user-to-user meeting in September 2011.
 - Ensure that data is available to set a management objectives.
 - Define a minimum requirement for a hunter return and reporting program across jurisdictions;
- The establishment of advice for a long-term population management objective, with an associated Total Allowable Harvest and allocation among the three jurisdictions as well as advice to ensure that appropriate harvest management systems are in place.

A User-to-User meeting was held September 19th-22nd in Inukjuak, Quebec, that included the same organizations as the Quebec Meeting but also brought in users from Nunavut, Quebec and Ontario. The result of the meeting was a voluntary agreement among a majority of the meeting participants (refer to Appendix 1)².

In summary, the following are the main points of the voluntary agreement:

- Agreement to a temporary voluntary limit to the Southern Hudson Bay polar bear take (including subsistence hunting and defense kills) to be implemented for the 2011/2012 hunting season:
 - 26 for Nunavik Inuit and 4 for Cree of Eeyou Istchee;
 - 25 for Nunavut;
 - 5 for the six coastal Cree Nations of Ontario;

¹ Government of Quebec-Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife; Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board; Makivik Corporation; Cree Regional Authority; Ontario Government-Ministry of Natural Resources; Ontario First Nation representatives; Government of Nunavut-Department of Environment; Nunavut Wildlife Management Board; Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated; Environment Canada;

² Following the meeting the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board confirmed that Nunavik communities have agreed to the voluntary agreement;

- Commitment to consider changes to the harvest limits in 2012 following the review of aerial surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012 and the review of traditional ecological knowledge;
- Agreement that governments/institutions will ensure adequate reporting and registration systems of all harvested bears;
- Commitment from Environment Canada to support an international export limit of 60 polar bear hides for the period contemplated under the agreement;

Considerations: The Board should be aware that the result of the user-to-user meeting was far different than the goal that was agreed to at the “Quebec Meeting” (i.e. a voluntary agreement to keep harvest in line with historic levels). The voluntary agreement actually increases the harvest for the Southern Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation from a historic total harvest of 50³ to 60 for 2011/2012⁴.

The current estimated population size for the SHB subpopulation is approximately 900-1000 bears (Obbard et al. 2007). Based on a maximum sustained yield (MSY) of 4.5% (assuming that the harvest ratio is 2 males to 1 female) the total sustainable harvest is approximately 40-45. In addition, current scientific information (Obbard et al. 2006) indicates significant declines in body condition for all age and sex classes between 1984-1986 and 2000-2005; and that the greatest decline is for pregnant females and subadults. It has also been suggested (Obbard et al. 2007) that the subpopulation is at a “*tipping point*” based on declines in body condition and declines in abundance should be expected in the near future. There is also evidence for the decline in sea ice habitat and maternity denning habitat. A comparison has been drawn to similar predications for the Western Hudson Bay subpopulation.

The Board should be aware of the following: (1) a MSY of 4.5% assumes a healthy productive population (in which the current scientific information indicates that this is not the case); (2) the only jurisdiction with sex-selective harvesting is Nunavut; and (3) a harvest of 60 is between 6% to 7%.

Recommendations: In the opinion of your Director of Wildlife Management, the voluntary agreement is not an ideal situation for Nunavut, however due to the circumstances it appears as a way to move forward and for Nunavut to maintain its international trade. Taking into consideration that new research results will be available in 2012 it is recommended that:

- (1) The NWMB work will relevant parties to discuss a coordinated decision-making process for a management objective and TAH's in all jurisdictions;
- (2) That the NWMB inform other interested parties if it is in agreement with the voluntary agreement for 2012;

Prepared By: Adam Schneidmiller, Director of Wildlife Management

Date: August 15th, 2011

³ Nunavut (Sanikiluaq) 25; Ontario 9; Quebec 16

⁴ Nunavut 25 (status quo); Ontario 5 (decrease of 4); Quebec 30 (increase of 14)

APPENDIX 1: Southern Hudson Bay Polar Bear Voluntary Agreement

CONSENSUS FROM THE
SOUTHERN HUDSON BAY POLAR BEAR MANAGEMENT MEETING
INUKJUAQ, 21 SEPTEMBER 2011

On 20-22 September 2011, Hunters, Inuit and Cree organizations and wildlife management boards, and governments involved in the management of the Southern Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation met in Inukjuak (see attached agenda).

1. All participants agree to a temporary voluntary limit to the Southern Hudson Bay polar bear take (including subsistence hunting and defense kills) to be implemented for the 2011/12 hunting season:
 - 26 for Nunavik Inuit, and 4 for Cree of Eeyou Istchee;
 - 25 for Nunavut;
 - 5 for the six coastal Cree Nations of Ontario.

These limits should be considered in the context of a flexible quota system as implemented under the Memorandum of Understanding between Sanikiluaq and the Nunavut Government.

2. All participants commit to consider changes in 2012, following the review of all new sources of information, including but not limited to the 2011 and 2012 aerial survey results and traditional knowledge, whether this means increased or decreased harvest levels.
3. All participants welcome the hunter desire to set a long term management plan and stand ready to assist as needed, including the establishment of a flexible quota system and/or any other means that are deemed appropriate.
4. All participants agree to maintain close communication and collaboration regarding the management and the design of appropriate research for polar bears.
5. The relevant governments/institutions will ensure adequate reporting and registration systems of harvested bears are in place. Hunters commit to accurately report the take of bears on a timely basis, including pertinent biological information necessary for management purposes.

6. An international export limit of 60 polar bear hides will be set effective 31 December 2011 for the period contemplated under this agreement.
7. For greater clarity, this voluntary agreement is without prejudice to other bilateral agreements pertaining to the harvest of polar bears including, but not limited to, the Guaranteed Harvest Levels arriving from the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.
8. All of the above is subject to consultation with appropriate authorities.
9. Agreed by:
 - Government of Nunavut
 - Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
 - Makivik Corporation
 - Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
 - Ministere des Ressources Naturelles et de la Faune
 - Cree Trappers Association
 - Attawapiskat First Nation
 - Fort Severn Cree Nation
 - Environment Canada
 - Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Organization
 - Hunters from Sanikiluaq
10. The following meeting participants will advise within 2 weeks on endorsement of this agreement through correspondence sent via Makivik Corporation
 - Inukjuak
 - Kuujuarapik
 - Umiujaq
11. Representatives from the following groups were not present at the meeting but will be encouraged to be involved.
 - Fort Albany
 - Kashechewan
 - Moose Cree First Nation
 - Weenusk First Nation at Peawanuck

