

Foxe Basin Polar Bear Survey Community Consultation Summary, July 2012

- What:** Summary notes of HTO consultation meetings
- Where:** For the Foxe Basin Bay polar bear sub-population
- Why:** Presenting recent aerial survey results
- Who:** Attendees were HTO board members in Chesterfield Inlet, Repulse Bay, Cape Dorset, Coral Harbor, Igloolik, Hall Beach; DOE representatives were present; NWMB and NTI representatives were absent; (Kimmirut HTO meeting initially set for 26 July 2012, but cancelled due to poor board member attendance – meeting will be re-scheduled)
- When:** Meetings were conducted between 25 June and 26 July 2012

General issues/common themes:

- 1) HTOs liked the use of non-invasive technique of aerial survey (AS) where bears are not handled.
- 2) HTOs do not like research that involves drugging of bears
- 3) All HTOs questioned the season timing of AS. DOE explained how timing ensured best possible results. Reasons, once explained seemed to be accepted by all HTOs.
- 4) There was generally support for the AS by HTOs; many also agree with the results.
- 5) Most HTOs agree that a small increase in quota could be acceptable so that the FB polar bear population remains stable given the past results.
- 6) HTOs thanked the GN for coming to communities to discuss the findings of the research project.
- 7) Most HTOs feel that it is worthwhile to talk to other HTO boards to discuss the future of FB polar bear quota, and to learn from each other (this view was not shared with Igloolik and Hall Beach HTOs).

Specific Issues:

a) Chesterfield Inlet

Are TAH increases based on new estimate? If the quota is the same, the population is not changing much; it depends on the objective for the future-should the population increase or be stable, or decrease. We have no data on survival rates when we use aerial surveys (AS); there is a lot more detailed data collected during CMR studies. AS produces only one number, but over repeated intervals a trend can be determined. We can only tell what was in the past and what happened to now, but we cannot predict into the future as was done in the past with CMR. There is a trade-off between not handling animals and not being able to predict what is going to

happen to a population in the future. If small increase in quota the risk is little, if a larger increase then the risk of uncertainty increases.

- Other communities will ask for more tags, and if they ask then communities should work together or communicate with each other. The Chesterfield Inlet HTO only hears from polar bear or GN people but rarely from other HTOs;
- Was suggested that if an increase is requested, the HTO should send a letter to RWO with this request.
- HTO thinks the current quota is a bit small to deal with problem bears because the tags are gone by June-July, and bears are dangerous when they come to town later in the year.
- Question about where hides should go from problem bears, as it was when there were no tags anymore: hide goes to HTO after investigation is completed and hide initially seized by officer.
- HTO agrees with AS and not handling bears because people still like to eat the meat of bears.
- Some confusion about how the tag system works, i.e., the old male and female colored tags; the current system was explained that tags are given to the HTO and they decide what to do with them, and when to hunt bears.
- HTO says that ice used to be around until July but now it is all moving by end of June, and they would ask for 2-3 more tags for spring season.
- HTO thanked GN for coming by to present results, really appreciated it.

b) Repulse Bay

It was not believed that Quebec harvested only 2-3 bears, there is an issue with the harvests of people from Quebec

- HTO says that ice varies from year to year and that there are lots of bears even in years with no or little ice
- HTO like that no bears are handled
- Mentions that some bears camouflage themselves by rolling in mud to hide
- HTO knows that there is an increase in number of bears; there are more bears now than there were; bears now come to you and into communities
- If quota is not increased there will be more bears coming to community; HTO does a constant job in deterring bears; if there is no change in quota we will be determined and not slowing down in killing problem bears
- We don't want to kill them but we need to defend lives and provide safety; community is happy to have COs around to assist and help in these issues

- Many people do not camp anymore because there are too many bears around
- People used to sleep on the ground with no tent when going on the land or whale hunting but not anymore
- HTO thanked GN for good news on stable population

c) Coral Harbor

Need full data assessment from FB so that there is agreement for management plan, that is what other communities are also saying and the GN will probably hear from them soon

- Looks like the population is stable, so what will the quota be? Right now it is 106 and the pop is stable. What can we do to increase quota because defense kills eat quota and the credit system also has an effect.
- Did inclusion of IQ in study help? Yes, for study design, for a study on bear behavior and ice or sea-ice habitat use to develop a model based on IQ, and also inclusion into TAH
- We think the bears have increased just from observations; it is important to document these observations for the future
- The findings will affect circumpolar people, not only people in Nunavut, like activists. We are not sure if there needs a quota increase, but there is a MOU and a mgmt plan in the future. The AS was a try-out for Nunavut, but we need to make a decision on the management plan. (With the AS we need to change perspective on management plan and polar bear management; we can defend our methods because they are used on many species in the world and also in Nunavut like narwhal, muskox, caribou).
- Bear numbers should be known now before the shipping starts with Baffinland
- There should have been more bears during the AS, because we all know that the numbers have increased over the past 10 years
- The HTO is satisfied with the AS results
- HTO had concern about the non-quota in Quebec and that no bears were seen on the map during the AS
- Northern Quebec should be consulted with on the results
- There are more and more younger bears seen and caught –are cubs included in AS

d) Cape Dorset

We are happy with using AS and not handling bears

- Elders say don't chase animals if you don't hunt them or use them
- There was concern about the Baffinland ice route and ice braking that could affect bears, disturbing bears' travel and bringing more bears over to Cape Dorset or Coral Harbor, and there could also be an effect on seals

e) Igloodik/Hall Beach

- As in other communities the HTO expressed support for continued use of the AS method
- They pointed out that the results confirmed what they had been saying about the population
- They felt strongly that bears should not be drugged
- asked if results would lead to an increase in the FB TAH?
- Responded that the request needs to come from the HTOs and explained the process
- HTO expressed frustration about the way in which communities were assigned tags by the RWOs
- Passed on statement from other HTOs that there was a need for the FB HTOs to have a conference call to discuss what presentations they might make regarding the TAH
- The HTO did not feel that that was likely to happen
- The HTO also expressed that there is a clear need to increase the TAHs for Igloodik and Hall Beach
- Believe that FB population needs to be decreased – too many bears – too much risk to people – leading to more defence kills
- HTO explained an IQ principle that the more you use animals that the more they increase so even a significant increase to the TAHs should not have a negative effect on the population
- Responded that in terms of probabilities, a modest increase to the overall TAH for Foxe Basin was less risky to the population than a large increase
- HTO thanked the GN for the presentation and emphasized that they do try to avoid defence kills and the taking of females.