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Minista Avatilitjutinut  
Minister of Environment  
Ministre de l'Environnement

October 27, 2006

Joe Tigullaraq  
Chairperson  
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board  
P.O. Box 1379  
Iqaluit, Nunavut  
X0A 0H0

**Re: Request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board on a management response to conservation concerns with the Western Hudson Bay (WH) Polar Bear Population**

Dear Mr. Tigullaraq;

As you are aware, and as described in the attached request for a decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB), there are conservation concerns with the West Hudson Bay (WH) polar bear population.

The concern is that the population has declined, and the levels of Total Allowable Harvest are not sustainable. As such, there is a conservation concern that at present TAH levels the WH polar bear population is declining, and a management action is necessary. Therefore, the attached request for a decision of the NWMB is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per Article 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement (NLCA).

The next harvesting season for polar bears begins on July 1, 2007, and it is necessary for conservation purposes that a management action be implemented by that date. Therefore I request that the NWMB make a decision on this request in sufficient time for a management action to be implemented by July 1, 2007.

The attached request provides a number of options for the NWMB to review when considering this request. I of course recognize that the NWMB is in no way bound or obligated to decide upon any of these options, and will make the decision it deems appropriate.

As you know the WH polar bear population is shared with other jurisdictions, and all polar bear populations are covered by the International Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears and Their Habitat. By ensuring that this population does not further decline we seek not only to protect the long term interests of Inuit harvesters who depend on bear hunting, but also the interests of all Nunavummiut and other jurisdictions who have an interest in responsible wildlife management.

If your staff has any questions about this request or require additional information they should contact Drikus Gissing, Director, Wildlife Management Division.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Patterk Netser  
Minister



**SUBMISSION TO THE**  
**NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**FOR**

**Information:**

**Decision: X**

**Issue: A management response to conservation concerns with the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population.**

**Background:**

In December 2004 the NWMB increased the TAH for the Western Hudson (WH) polar bear population. Since that time new information on the WH population has been received. This information indicates that the population has declined in number, and at the present TAH level, is being over harvested and will continue to decline.

A recent analysis by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) for the WH polar bear population identified a decline from 1200 to about 950 over the last 20 years. It is believed that this decline is due to the combined effect of climate change and harvesting.

**Consultations:**

In the fall of 2005 consultations were done with the communities that harvest from this population. The WH consultations occurred at a population workshop with HTO and RWO representatives from Arviat, Whale Cove, Rankin Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, and the Kivalliq Regional Wildlife Organization.

The opinions expressed by local hunters are in not in total agreement with the scientific information. In general they do not believe there has been a reduction in the populations, and do not support any reductions in TAH. The reasons for this difference in perspective were discussed but not resolved. It may be that climate change has altered polar bear distribution patterns and behavior giving the impression that there are more bears and more bear-human encounters. Consultations were completed before the December 2005 NWMB meeting, and the NWMB was provided with a summary of the discussions at that meeting. An English transcript and summary of the WH consultations is available and has been provided to the NWMB staff.

**Recommendations:**

That the NWMB make a decision on a management response to the present conservation concerns with the WH polar bear population. As per the attached letter, this request for a

decision is being submitted as a Ministerial Management Initiative as per section 5.3.25 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement. As such a decision of the NWMB is requested in sufficient time for management response to be implemented by July 1, 2007.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 - Options for a management response to the conservation concern with the West Hudson Bay population of polar bears.



## **Appendix 1 - Options for a management response to the conservation concern with the West Hudson Bay population of polar bears**

**NOTE:** The present TAH for the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population is 56 annually. Each of the following options is a proposed reduction from that number. New information on this population is being developed through ongoing and planned research being conducted by the Department of Environment and the Canadian Wildlife Service. As this information is reviewed and analyzed, the NWMB and the Minister of Environment will be more informed and in a better position to again consider the TAH for this population.

### **Option 1**

Return to the historical TAH of 47 per year beginning with the 2007/2008 harvest year.

### **Option 2**

Return to the historical TAH of 47 per year beginning with the 2007/2008 harvest year. Then implement a phased reduction of 7 per year until the TAH is reduced to the estimated maximum sustainable harvest level (18 per year at current numbers or less than 18 per year if the population continues to decline).

### **Option 3**

Return to the historical TAH of 47 per year beginning with the 2007/2008 harvest year. Then implement a phased reduction of 7 per year until the TAH is reduced to the estimated 90% harvest risk level (16 per year at current numbers or less than 16 per year if the population continues to decline).

### **Option 4**

Beginning with the 2007/2008 harvest year impose a harvest moratorium in WH (reduce the TAH to 0) until the population has increased to the target number of 1400 polar bears, as identified in the MOU.

### **Option 5**

Beginning with the 2007/2008 harvest year set the TAH at 38, which is the average take of bears from this population for the last 6 years.