



## **Baffin Bay Polar Bear Submission to the NWMB**

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### **Issue:**

The Government of Nunavut is proposing to decrease the Baffin Bay Polar bear TAH in Nunavut based on new harvest information from Greenland.

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### **Background:**

#### **1. Timeline**

- **1960's** Polar Bear management and quotas introduced to communities in NWT.
- **1970's** Quotas were community based rather than population specific.
  - Clyde River quota was 45 and Broughton Island quota was 30.
- **1981** population studies initiated by GNWT for Baffin Bay Polar Bears.
  - The first population estimate for Baffin Bay Polar Bears was 300-600.
  - The GNWT was concerned that a quota of 75 (45+30) for Clyde River and Broughton Island was too large.
- **1986** an Agreement was reached between the GNWT and the HTA to reduce the quotas and pay compensation
  - Clyde River was reduced from 45 to 15
  - Broughton Island was reduced from 30 to 10
- **1993** the approach to Polar Bear management was changing from "community quotas" to "population quotas" shared by communities.
  - Polar Bear Agreements were signed for 13 Polar Bear populations in the NWT.
  - The GNWT considered the Baffin Bay population to be shared by Pond Inlet as well as Broughton Island and Clyde River.
  - Compensation payments were renamed "Community Assistance Payments" and were not part of the Polar Bear Agreement for Baffin Bay.
  - Hunters felt the quotas were too low because they were seeing more bears during the open-water season and the study area did not include areas offshore past the shore-fast ice
  - The quotas were increased to 21 in Clyde River and 21 in Broughton Island.
- **1996** consultations began to renew the Polar Bear Agreements and they were called MOU's at the request of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Advisory Board.

- **1997** the GNWT stopped paying the “Community Assistance Payments”
  - New population studies confirmed Inuit claims that the population was larger than 300-600, the new estimate was 2074, but the Government also felt that the population was shared with Greenland and were not willing to return to the historical harvest levels of 45 for Clyde River and 30 for Broughton Island.
- **2002** a third round of Nunavut-wide consultations was conducted to update the Polar Bear MOUs.
  - The communities of Broughton Island and Clyde River were still upset that the compensation payments were ended without consultation and the quotas weren't returned to 45 and 30.
  - The Baffin Bay communities were among the last to sign the MOU and only did so once the quotas were returned to their historical level of 45 and 30.

## **2. Recent Correspondence and Meetings**

### **April 2007**

The Government of Nunavut submitted a proposal on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2007 requesting a decision by the NWMB based on conservation concern with the Baffin Bay polar bear population.

The letter references historical levels as 64 (including Pond Inlet) and not what the communities consider as historical levels of 45 for Clyde and 30 for Broughton.

Population estimates and simulations calculated by the government of Nunavut indicate the population has declined from 2100 in 1997 to about 1500 to date. They attribute this decline to the combined overharvesting of the Baffin Bay population by Canadian and Greenlandic harvesters.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> last paragraph of the letter from the Minister indicates that Greenland has implemented a reduction in harvest. The Greenland government has implemented a quota but has yet to demonstrate how this will be followed and/or enforced. It should be further noted that the “Piniarneq” reporting system that Greenland has, is voluntary. The results are currently being validated due to uncertainty about over reporting as well as under reporting.

The new population estimate is based on model simulations and not based on any recent surveys or on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The last population survey was conducted between 1994 and 1997. The estimated population in 1997 was approximately 2100.

### **August 2007**

The Government of Nunavut (GN), Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) and Environment Canada (EC) met together in an informal meeting in August, 2007 in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut to discuss Polar Bear management. The meeting exchanged information between the co-management partners, the GN and EC made a commitment to communicate with the Greenland Government on this issue.

**To date there has been no meeting between Canada and Greenland.**

### 3. Baffin Bay Polar Bear MOU

#### Section 5.5.1 (a) Determination of the TAH

For the first seven (7) years following an accurate population inventory, the TAH shall be set as the "Conservative Harvest Rate".

For the next seven (7) years, or until a new population inventory has been completed, the TAH shall be set as the "Guided Harvest Rate".

When there is no reliable population inventory information, the TAH shall be set as the "Guided Harvest Rate".

The "Guided Harvest Rate" is defined under the Baffin Bay MOU 1.5 as:

**"Guided Harvest Rate"** means the number of bears that can be taken without reducing the population below the target number. The "Guided Harvest rate" is based on Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), perception of trend, and probability of increase or decline. The "Guided Harvest Rate" must be consistent with the principles of conservation identified in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA).

The Government of Nunavut, HTOs and the NWMB have been using the "Guided Harvest Rate" to set the TAH for Baffin Bay population since 2005.

### 4. Greenland Harvest

The Greenland report **"The catch of polar bears in Greenland, 1993-(2004)"** to the Canadian Polar Bear Technical Committee in Edmonton in February 2005 by E.W. Born includes a harvest table of Polar Bears harvested in Greenland from 1993-2004. The table below is an example from the Greenland community of Upernavik which harvests from Baffin Bay.

#### Upernavik Harvest

Year	Harvest		Year	Harvest
1993	43		2001	64
1994	25		2002	72
1995	27		2003	135
1996	40		2004	79
1997	38			
1998	48			
1999	49			
2000	40			
<b>Average</b>	<b>38</b>		<b>Average</b>	<b>88</b>

## **5. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit**

During the Western Hudson Bay (WHB) Polar Bear public hearing in Arviat, the NWMB made a decision to reduce the WHB TAH from 56 to 8 for 2008/2009. It was felt by Inuit that the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) presented at the hearing was not given the same respect or value as the western science when it came time to make a decision.

NTI is concerned that the lack of equal respect for IQ in the Western Hudson Bay hearing will prevail as the Board considers the recommendations and options for the Baffin Bay (BB) polar bear population.

IQ may not be in written form but it is knowledge just like science is knowledge. It should be viewed with equal importance. Western science may not be able to use IQ for population estimates, but IQ can be used to indicate polar bear population trends and the health of the population.

NWMB is a co-management body and we expect that the Board will give equal weight to both science and IQ when deciding on restricting Inuit harvesting.

## **6. Community Impact**

The 1986 Agreement set a precedent between the Government and the HTAs by providing compensation due to the reduction of quotas and the impact it had on the communities.

The proposed reduction of 41 bears or more for Baffin Bay will have a huge impact on the communities of Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq. The GN and its predecessor the GNWT have established relationships with communities to report harvests and participate in a management system so as to manage polar bear populations and gain benefits from Sport hunts or sales of skins. In 2007 the three communities combined, had a total of 35 sport hunts. At an approximate value of \$25,000.00 per hunt, it adds up to \$875,000.00 of lost income into the communities.

Inuit have honorably followed the management systems and the spirit of the MOUs. The Government on the other hand, has not always lived up to the commitments they have made.

### **Recommended Option:**

The GN and the affected communities of Pond Inlet, Clyde River and Qikiqtarjuaq reopen the Baffin Bay MOU as per section 1.11 of the MOU, to allow for adequate consultation and discussion on the identified management concerns. At the same time the GN and the Government of Canada engage the Greenland Government to coordinate the discussion of the management concerns and identify possible management recommendations for both jurisdictions. No changes to the TAH's should be made as per section 5.5.1 of the Baffin Bay MOU.

**Date:** April 11, 2008

**Prepared by:** NTI Wildlife Department